M Lane

THE ROUÉ.

Were you, ye fair, but cautious whom ye trust,
So many of your sex would not in vain,
Of broken vows and faithless men complain.

Rowe.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE ROUÉ

INTRODUCTION.

——————————— To feel
We are not what we have been; and to deem
We are not what we should be; and to steel
The heart against itself; and to conceal,
With a proud caution, love, or hate, or aught—
Passion or feeling—purpose, grief, or zeal;
Which is the tyrant spirit of our thought,
Is a stern task of soul—no matter—it is taught.
BYRON.

How many of the genuine feelings of human nature have been repressed and spoiled by the coldness of those outward forms which constitute so great a proportion of our education!

We enter into the world with buoyant feelings, fresh and "thick-coming fancies," enthusiastic anticipation—with hearts and hands open to the impression and impulses of love, friendship, and generosity, and with a multitude of senses and passions, all promising pleasure in their pursuit and their gratification.

We feel the genuine tears of sympathy spring into our eyes at a tale of distress; and while

The world to our unpractised hearts
A flattering prospect shows;
Our fancy forms a thousand schemes
Of gay delights and golden dreams,
And undisturb'd repose:

we find our young pulses bounding with delight at the sight of beauty, and experience a thousand sensations which impel us to an intimate intercourse of hearts with our fellow-creatures; and the first thing we are taught in life, is to unlearn

these early lessons of our nature: to repress these delightful springings of the heart—

To shut up all the passages of joy:

and to substitute the coldness of educated ceremony for these bursts of genuine feelings. We are taught to repress our generosity, to steel our hearts against the influence of beauty, and to admit friendship and love only where they are compatible with our interest. Interest, that mainspring of human nature, as it is called, at whose shrine all our best feelings are sacrificed, and to which our young hearts are directed in school-days, at college, and through the world, as the only God that should be worshipped.

The whole of our early life seems to be spent in getting rid of nature, and in the acquirement of artifice, till our hearts and minds are no more like that for which they were first intended, than the tree, which some laborious Cincinnatus of a cit has trimmed into the shape of a peacock, is like that which has grown up in all the unconfined and vigorous luxuriance of its native forest.

All the first feelings of our nature in early life become the subjects of punishment or reproof: the buoyancy of our youthful spirit is curbed, because it encroaches on the conventional forms of society. Natural enthusiasm is repressed and shamed with the stigma of eccentricity; and the whole system of our education is an attempt to put the heart in an ice-pail, and to treat it as we do our Champagne, without considering that though coldness may improve the wine, it is certain to deteriorate the man.

All our first lessons of life come upon the heart, as the rude hand upon the leaf of the sensitive plant. It shrinks within itself, ashamed of the feelings which it is thus compelled to bury within its own limits; and finding no outlet for them, they perish, in time, for want of use, as a limb will become contracted, and wither and die for want of exercise.

It is this which gives such a sameness to society. It is this which prevents that individuality of character which made the heroes, the lovers, and the friends of the "golden age." All is now conventional form and outward ceremony. Friendships are made or broken as these forms prescribe, and are seldom strong enough to abide the storm of adversity—to stand the test of ridicule—or the influence of etiquette.

Love is no longer the buoyant, pure, and generous passion, that has excited the hearts, which experienced it to the greatest actions to accomplish its gratification ; but is a mere word generally used, only because it is found in the vocabulary of our language with a particular meaning attached to it, as certain law-terms are still in vogue, although the spirit which rendered them necessary has long since expired. Like those who by artificial light put out that of the day ; so have we, by borrowed forms and fashions, destroyed the sunlight of our own natural and best feelings :

> And Love's and Friendship's finely-pointed dart
> Fall blunted from each indurated heart.

In short, love, friendship, feeling of every kind, are all under the prescriptive rules of society. Young men are educated with the view to making or increasing their fortune by marriage ; and young women, with no other idea than that of forming an establishment. This is, perhaps, more applicable to the latter than to the former ; since the very first lesson a woman receives, is to disguise her real sentiments : this engenders artifice ; artifice in time, annihilates the feeling which originally existed ; and instead of the noble, generous nature of woman—for her nature is noble and generous—we have the sophisticated pieces of animated wax-work, which form the aggregate of female society : fair and pure to look upon, as the drifted snow, and generally quite as cold.

I appeal to my female readers,—if they do not throw my book down with indignation at the last sentence,—whether they have no recollection of the first budding feelings of their heart being thus repressed by some prim mahogany governess,—some starched prude who put her conventional notions of propriety upon the first sensibilities of their nature, precisely in the same manner as she put the back-board upon their shoulders, or their feet into the stocks. But what a pity is it, that as their forms swell into the full maturity of beauty, and when the bubbling feelings of the heart ought to grow into generous passion, that these feelings should retrograde under a discipline which withers them into inanity ! What a pity, that, as their lovely forms expand, their minds and hearts should contract ; that, as they become more capable of bestowing and of receiving enjoyment from their natural feelings, that these feelings should, like their flowing tresses,

be subjected to the curling-irons of ceremony! What a pity that love should be taught to be considered as a crime; that enthusiasm should be proscribed as folly; and that conventional ceremony, and *les choses convenables*, should be the only things impressed upon the minds of youthful females, as of consequence to be observed!

What a number of noble creatures are thus spoiled! How many of our best and purest pleasures are thus marred! How many of the solaces and resources of mankind ruined! How many generous mothers and affectionate wives perverted; while man is condemned to take a cold creature of ceremony to his arms instead of a woman warm with all the mind and heart and feeling with which nature had endowed her for the purpose of delighting his senses, in health and happiness—and soothing his pains and anxieties, in sickness and in sorrow! Enthusiasm seems scouted as much as though it meant, in our acceptation of it, the literal translation of the Greek word, which Voltaire renders by the words *émotion d'entrailles*: for did it literally mean nothing more, it could not be more avoided than it is at present.

And yet, perhaps, when we look through the world and observe the various arts which the insidious and vicious of the other sex spread around them, this coldness may be deemed necessary as a defence; and mothers and governesses find an excuse for the repression of feeling in the dangers to which it is exposed.

The apology for this is indeed to be found in the coquetry of woman, and in the heartlessness of man.

It has been observed by poetical botanists, that there is not a flower that has not a worm ready to prey upon and destroy its beauties; and thus it is that a young heart seldom gives way to warm and generous impulses, without finding some one heartless enough to take advantage of these young and inexperienced feelings; and who having excited, too often betrays them by desertion.

A young man goes inexperienced into society—admires some beauty—and, encouraged by her conduct, gives up his whole soul to his first love. The moment, however, he has completed her triumph by a declaration of his passion, he finds that it has been bestowed upon a heartless *coquette*, who cares not for the pang she has inflicted, and derides the affection she has inspired.

A girl with a warm and feeling heart is sought by some

Roué, whose sole aim is to inspire a passion which it is never his intention to gratify. He does every thing but declare himself.—The nature of his attentions—the tone of his voice—every thing conveys an indication of his love; but he keeps just out of that pale, within which he knows if he passes, his explicit purpose must be declared; and he thus leads on a young heart, "sick with deferred hope," till he quits it to weep that it should have devoted its earliest, purest, and best feelings to such a worthless coxcomb.

There is, however, a medium between the coldness of mere conventional propriety, and the unrepressed exuberance of nature. Let a sound judgment be placed as a sentinel upon the feelings, and they will be more likely to lead to happiness than if totally repressed.

We would have women creatures of nature, as well as of education: we would have their hearts as well as their heads cultivated, and not find them as they now too often are,—flowers, like those discovered by our late travellers to the North Pole, beautiful to the eye, but enclosed in an icicle, which in melting destroys them.*

* Capt. Lyon's Journal.

CHAPTER I.

A CONTRAST.

——— girl, so cold and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure,
Forget thyself to marble ———

——— ——— ——— a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair;
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathed smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek.—MILTON.

"FOR shame! for shame! Agnes, to come bursting into the room so rudely, and with your hair all hanging about so negligently:—is that like a lady?" exclaimed Lady Pomeroy, as her niece, a lively dark-eyed girl of about ten years of age, with a profusion of black curls waving in natural ringlets over her dark but clear forehead, came jumping and laughing into the dining parlour, to partake of the dessert, and of a parental kiss after dinner.

"Why do you not imitate your sister Amelia?—you see she does not come in such a hurry," pursued the same lady, as her eye turned towards the door with an approving glance at a fine fair-haired girl of eleven, who walked quietly and demurely into the room, and dropping a D'Egville curtsey at her entrance, made the round of the table; turning first one cheek, and then the other, to her parents and her aunt, without the possibility of discomposing either the economy of her own ringlets, or, like her sister, disturbing anybody by her boisterous caresses.

"Your aunt speaks truly, Agnes," said her father; you are growing too old to give way to this childishness, and you will indeed do well to begin to imitate the manners of Amelia."

The buoyant spirit of the youthful Agnes was, for a moment, checked by the reproof of her aunt, and by the severe

glance of her father; but it soon revived, when she looked timidly into the face of her mother, who gazed tenderly and half pityingly on her, as she pressed her warmly to her bosom, when she came to her end of the table, a place she invariably sought the last; because there she was sure to gain a small portion of her mother's chair, and fruit; and with her she could chat and laugh, and give vent to all the childish and volatile spirits with which nature had blessed her.

"You should consider, my dear," said the mother in an apologetic tone. "that Agnes has not had the advantage that Amelia possesses in living so much with her aunt; and consequently, her spirits are not so much under control; neither has she enjoyed the tuition of D'Egville, to regulate her movements, nor of Crivelli to modulate her voice, nor a number of other privileges which the kindness of Lady Pomeroy has procured for her sister."

These words were accompanied with a glance which almost bespoke an admiration and a love of the little being who was the subject of her apology, greater than that which she felt for her whose superiority her words acknowledged.

But there was an appearance of melancholy, almost allied to pity, in this glance, which would have given an attentive observer the idea that she was looking into futurity, and dreading the effects of that acute sensibility which formed the principal characteristic of the young Agnes. Perhaps, at this moment, her memory glanced back to the time when her own heart leaped and bounded with all the young energies of incipient feeling;—when the tear of pity, or the smile of gladness, was always ready to spring, at the slightest call, to her own lips and eyes. Perhaps, too, her imagination traced, with that power which it has of collecting and remembering the events and condensing results of whole years into the space of a moment, the long series of coldness by which all these young feelings had been checked and deadened, from the period of her sacrificing her first love at the shrine of filial duty and affection, to that in which she was now sitting, herself the mother of a being possessed of all those feelings, by the encouragement and the subsequent blight of which she had been condemned to a life of perpetual probation; and she almost wished that the heart of her darling Agnes was as cold as the world in which it was created to exist.

"It is time, Mrs. Fleming," said her husband, in his formal

and imperturbable manner, "that Agnes should enjoy the advantages you speak of. Nature may do well enough for the *canaille*, but I would have my daughter well taught, and well bred; and we cannot be too much obliged to my sister Lady Pomeroy, for the infinite pains she has taken with Amelia. Lady Pomeroy, will you send D'Egville to Mrs. Fleming tomorrow?"

Lady Pomeroy, who was quite as much an advocate for artificial education as her brother, gladly undertook the task. Mrs. Fleming, as usual, did not object, though she thought the natural movements of her darling Agnes far more graceful than any that could be given by art; while Agnes herself only saw in the proposition the delight of having a dancing-master, without anticipating the restraint her hitherto free limbs were condemned to undergo.

The indulgence, however, of any appearance of extravagant pleasure, was repressed by the frowns of her father, and by her aunt's directing her to imitate the quiet and lady-like behaviour of her sister, who divided her fruit, and sipped her wine, as though she had no pleasure in partaking of them; and dipped her taper fingers into the crystal finger-glass with all the airs and graces of a little woman of fashion.

It had been fixed that they should this evening visit the theatre; and notwithstanding all her mother's coaxing and hushing, Agnes could not restrain her impatience at the delay of the carriage; she started at every sound, with an exclamation of "There it is!" and on each disappointment, rather vehemently expressed her fear of being too late.

All this was frowned at by her father, and nodded down by her aunt; while Amelia felt, or at least betrayed, no impatience or any anticipation of pleasure.

At length the carriage was announced. Agnes sprang from her mother's knee; her shawl was thrown hastily round her shoulders, without any regard to appearance or form; and she was in the hall and ready to depart, while her sister's maid was still folding a cashmere gracefully on the neck of Amelia, under the superintendence of Lady Pomeroy.

In spite of the delays occasioned by the ceremony of dressing out her sister, and of her father's methodical movements, which to the imagination of poor Agnes, seemed to proceed in doubly slow time this evening, they arrived at the theatre just as the curtain was rising.

Agnes could scarcely repress her delight as she first caught

a glimpse of the stage from the private-box; for Mr. Fleming's ideas of propriety would not permit the close contact with strangers, which is occasioned by the occupation of a public one; though Agnes could not help fancying that she should see much better in front of the theatre, than from one of the sides, where she was perpetually stretching her neck out of the box to the great discomfiture of her father, and to the horror of her well-bred aunt.

To her the scene was a new one, and every part of it afforded her pleasure; the people—the chandeliers—the house—the scenery—by turns extorted exclamations of childish delight; and she was perpetually directing her mother's attention, who alone heeded her, to one or other of the objects which excited her admiration.

In the mean time, Amelia sat in front of the box, with the folds of her cashmere undisturbed; the pride of her father and aunt, and certainly very beautiful.

As the play proceeded, the raptures of Agnes subsided: she became silent and attentive—wrapt up in the scene she was witnessing, her whole soul seemed absorbed in the horrors of the tragedy before them; when, to the consternation of Lady Pomeroy, at a moment when the whole house was wrapt in silent admiration of the powers of Mrs. Siddons, poor Agnes burst into a convulsive fit of tears, which were beyond her power to restrain or control, and her tender mother was obliged to hush her to tranquillity in a retired part of the box, by repeated representations that the scene was but fictitious.

It was some time, however, before she could imagine that all which she had seen was not real; nor did she quite overcome her feelings of terror and regret at the catastrophe of Isabella, until the humours of the harlequinade which followed, again absorbed her attention.

Here again her laughter at the tricks, of the clown and pantaloon; her surprise at the agility of Harlequin and Columbine; and her childish exclamations of wonder at metamorphoses, which seemed to realize all that she had read in the Fairy Tales that constituted part of her infantine library, once more offended the punctilious *bienseance* of Lady Pomeroy.

During the whole exhibition, Amelia sat apparently an attentive spectator; but her cold and beautiful blue eye denoted no sympathy with the scene; her countenance betrayed no

wonder at the tricks of the pantomime; nor could all the contortions of the clown produce more than a quiet smile upon her well-formed lips. And yet Amelia had not witnessed the tragedy without feeling; nor did she now contemplate the wonders of the pantomime without pleasure; but she had been schooled into a repression of all its appearances. She had been taught that the expressions of wonder or any show of sensibility was unpolite and unlady-like. And the outward ease which she was thus compelled to wear, was gradually indurating the heart beneath it. It was already acting as a frost upon the stream of her youthful disposition, and nipping the generosity of her nature in the bud.

At length the curtain dropped, and shut the magic scene from the still-straining eyes of Agnes. And which of us does not remember the regret with which we in childhood have seen the dark-green curtain descending, and covering the splendours of the temple of pantomime, its tinsel waters, and its glittering canvass pillars? Who does not recollect the melancholy with which we have seen the audience hurry out of the theatre, and the candle-snuffer put out the lights and hang the aprons over the boxes; and with which we turn from the bright imagination of the poet and the painter to the dull realities of our lives? How little do we then imagine that in a few, a very few years, we shall wait impatiently for that which then gave us so much pain; and that we shall have the greatest difficulty in keeping our eyes open to witness objects from which we then derived so much delight, that we imagine we wish them to endure for ever!

Not all the influence of her mother, nor the formal reproofs of her father and aunt could repress the prattle of Agnes as the carriage whirled them home. Question followed question, and wonder succeeded wonder, as she recapitulated all she had seen: and Amelia was buried in sleep long before Agnes had finished her relation of all the wonders she had witnessed to her maid.

Mrs. Fleming had contemplated the different characters of her children, as they were exhibited that evening, with equal regret. She mourned over the schooled mannerism of the one, as much as she dreaded the acute sensibilities of the other. She would have warmed, had she possessed the power, the heart and feelings of Amelia with a little of the Promethean fire which burnt too strongly in the spirit of Agnes—a spirit alas, too like her own, and which, as she re-

called all the early scenes of her own existence, made her tremble for the happiness of her daughter. She sighed—

——to think how soon that brow
In grief might lose its every ray,
And that light heart, so joyous now,
Almost forgot it once was gay.

As these scenes and circumstances recurred to her imagination and remembrance, she mentally exclaimed—"Ought I not rather to school her into the insensibility of her sister, than encourage feelings which may blossom only to be blighted? Is it not better for her to be insensible to the more exquisite pleasures of our nature, than run the hazard of their being turned to bitterness, as mine have been?"

Yet with all the experience of her own blighted hopes, with all the remembrance of the miseries entailed on her by her own acute sense of feeling, she could not resolve to wish the heart of Agnes to be cold or inanimate.

But the sensibility of her nature was now daily developing to the anxious observation of an affectionate and tremblina mother; who, for the sake of her child, began to dread th g death, which she had long anticipated from her increasing feebleness, but which had no terrors for her in its approach.

She now, however, saw the necessity of a kind directing hand; and too plainly perceived that the severity of ceremony which characterized Mr. Fleming, was not adapted to the education and guidance of such a heart and mind as those of Agnes were, in their germs, and promised to be in their maturity.

She determined, therefore, to struggle with the incipient consumption which had already tinted her cheek with that bright and beautiful spot, which has too often deceived both its victims and their friends. Alas! the very struggle fo. life under such a disease only tends to its speedier exhaustion! But for her young and innocent child she could resolve to live, although life had long lost all its charms for her; to subdue the excess of feeling, which had already begun to display itself, without banishing it entirely; to regulate her sensibilities, without annihilating them; to place a sound judgment, and a pure sense of religion, as sentinels over an exuberant fancy, and a wild imagination, was the plan of education which occupied the mind of this tender mother, as she reclined upon her sleepless pillow; and for which of us has not the pillow of a parent been sleepless through many a long

night?—for which of us has it not been bathed with tears of agonizing anxiety as to the future welfare of a beloved child?

As her love mingled with her fears for Agnes, a mother's voice breathed a fervent prayer to the great Director of all hearts for the happiness of her child.

Does not such an humble prayer ascend more gratefully, direct from the heart, and dictated by the feelings, to the throne of the Almighty, than the ritual which form prescribes, though clothed with all the magnificence of language, and chanted amidst the imposing solemnities of sacerdotal ceremony,

Where pealing organs swell the note of praise.

CHAPTER II.

RETROSPECTION.

And now the weary traveller attains
Some towering height—at last
He rests in his career, and backward looks
O'er forests dark and lengthy plains,
At rushing torrents, babbling brooks,
Beauties and barrenness, that alike
Upon his mind with melancholy strike,
Because they are past.

ANON.

THE early history of Mrs. Fleming was that of many young women whose fashion is superior to their fortune, and whose parents rather consider the establishment than the happiness of their child. Born with all the genuine feelings of her sex, with a heart capable of loving warmly, and with ideas that marriage should be the result only of affection, she yielded up her young heart to its first impulses in favour of a person a few years older than herself, whose talents for conversation and powers of entertainment had made him a frequent and a welcome guest at her father's table.

To procure establishments for a numerous family, was the great and only ambition of her mother, Lady Mary Dornton

It was this lady's policy, therefore, to render her dinner-table and drawing-room as attractive as gayety, talent, and entertainment, could make them; and she felt proud in the contemplation of her success, as three married daughters sometimes graced the paternal board, while the scions of many of her contemporary rival matrons yet moved on in single blessedness.

She had still, however, a daughter to dispose of; and the Honourable Mr. Dornton's declining health made her dread a circumstance which, by leaving her only in possession of a widow's jointure, would prevent the continuance of her system, and deprive them of the advantages and facilities which crowded drawing-rooms and quadrilles and duets afford to young ladies and manœuvring mammas.

Lady Mary had married a younger brother, and was not like some of her contemporaries, whose fortunes enabled them to render their houses and tables attractive by the sumptuousness of their feasts, and the splendour of her entertainments; she therefore had recourse to all the talent of the day, as an attraction to counterbalance the advantage which superior fortunes gave so many of her competitors in the field of matrimonial speculation.

To have written a poem or a play, or to be celebrated for either instrumental or vocal performances, or, in short, to be celebrated for any thing, was a sure passport to the parties of Lady Mary Dornton.

She had sufficient taste and discrimination herself to feel the superiority of intellectual over merely sensual gratification: she felt that the wit which presided as the tutelar deity of her own dinners, rendered them superior in attraction to the wines which sparkled in such expensive variety at those of others; and she herself paid a tribute to this superiority by her own enjoyment of the "feast of reason and the flow of soul" which she provided for others. But, alas! she forgot that these very means were perpetual impediments in the way of her own success, by showing the superiority of talent over rank and fortune. She forgot that the liveliness of the penniless wit only served to make the dulness of the man of ten thousand a year more conspicuous; not that dulness and ten thousand a year are synonymous; for there really are some people with twice this income who are very pleasant fellows and very loveable persons in spite of it.

Unfortunately for Lady Mary's system, when the wit and observation of a man are sharpened by a collision with the world, in all the various states in which it is shown at sessions, and assizes, and in the King's Bench and Common Pleas, and the numberless other scenes in which active talent is employed, together with the perpetual exercise of ingenuity and eloquence,—it generally makes the younger brother who is brought up to the bar, a pleasanter fellow and a more agreeable lover than the elder one who is brought up to the estate.

But younger brothers were not Lady Mary's objects now. Though she had not disdained one in her youth. They were not likely to afford establishments of sufficient consequence to provide her a periodical residence when the dreaded event we have alluded to should occur; and it was her plan that her daughter's houses should be such as would enable them to return in kind, in her old age and widowhood, that which she had done for them in their youth: in short, in all their establishments, she had an eye to her own future comforts.

Unfortunately, however, her scheme, though it eventually succeeded, kept the hearts of her daughters in a perpetual state of rebellion against their interests. They could not associate with talent without feeling its influence; they could not hear soft and sweet music from the voice of one man, resplendent repartee from the lips of another, and feel a deep interest in the voyages, adventures, and "hair-breadth 'scapes" of a third, and turn round and bestow their admiration and affection upon one who was perhaps looking only with envy upon these qualifications without possessing any of them, and whose only claim to admiration was a title or an estate unencumbered by any thing but his own dulness and stupidity.

Yet this was precisely what lady Mary wished and expected her daughters to do; and consequently there was not one of them married to the man whom her own heart would have preferred, had it been left free and unbiassed in its choice.

It has often struck us that the heads of a family are not justified in the admission of any person into the intimate society of their children, to whom, should an attachment occur, there would be any decided objection. They should recollect that young hearts do not discriminate like old heads, and should be careful how they introduce talent, cheerfulness, and pleasantry, united with youth and perhaps personal attraction, while their possessors are persons to whom they would object

as husbands for their daughters. Yet of this imprudence how many parents are guilty! They themselves are pleased merely with the talent which excites in them only admiration; and they seem to forget that in younger minds and hearts this sensation is too likely to be accompanied by softer feelings, which may give a colour to future existence.

Happily for all but Mrs. Fleming, they were possessed of hearts which soon gratefully acknowledged the prudence of their mother, and which soon forgot their early predilections in favour of sentiment, in the contemplation and enjoyment of equipage and splendour.

Unluckily for Agnes, the subject of our present episode and the mother of our heroines, her heart was more deeply susceptible of its first impressions. She could not love and forget; her feelings once aroused, she could not find a Lethean draught either in pleasure or in splendour to bury the remembrance of them in oblivion. Oh what a happy art is forgetfulness! from how many pangs does it save us! how many a heart has it prevented from breaking! and to how many minds has it restored peace and tranquillity!

Among those who were frequent and welcome guests at the table and in the drawing-room of Lady Mary Dornton, was Augustus Clifton. He had just quitted college, and had commenced his literary career by a poem, which had given notoriety to his name, and which of course became a visiting ticket to parties where talent was the passport for admittance.

But Clifton was not a hackneyed poet. His production was that of impulse rather than of education. He had portrayed the passions, not as he had read of them, but as he felt them growing up in his own heart. He was a poet by nature, and all nature appeared to his young and unsullied imagination but as a beautiful poem;—he considered all his undefined longings, all his incipient passions, only as so many legitimate passports to enjoyment. He had indeed the mind of a true poet—he looked at every thing abstractedly—he loved nature—he loved the world, and called it a beautiful world, because all things seemed to conspire to his wishes. He loved fame too, and wished to live in futurity—he could not bear that with his life his name should pass away—he wished that it might be enrolled among the master spirits of poetry in the Abbey—he wished posterity to read it recorded with those from whose works he quoted so frequently and so aptly—he could not bear that

He should be left, forgotten in the dust;
When fate, relenting, lets the flower revive.

One vigorous effort of a young mind had gained him a celebrity which he was inexperienced enough to suppose would stand him in the stead of rank and fortune; he imagined the caresses and the invitations he received on all hands to be the permanent result of respect for his talents, instead of the evanescent feeling which would last only so long as he could afford entertainment. He believed the professions of assistance which he received to be sincere, and imagined that he saw a hand ready to help him up every step of the ladder of fame, and that fortune waited to welcome him at the top of it.

He was yet to learn that selfish vanity was the groundwork of all the kindness he received, and that the moment his presence ceased to gratify this passion in his admirers, they would cease to remember that he existed.

He little thought that his patrons of the moment would treat him as they did their champagne, enjoy its sparkling qualities, and dash aside the bottle which contained them the moment they ceased to exhilarate.

Unfortunately for poor Mrs. Fleming, at the moment of Clifton's first introduction, her mother's mind was so intensely occupied with her manœuvres to make her third daughter the lady of a young baronet who had succeeded to an estate of seven thousand a year, that she was permitted unmolested to form her own little coteries in the drawing-room, to secure the arm and the companionship of the one she liked best to the dinner-table, and was allowed sufficient leisure to see and appreciate the talent which was considered by her mother only as an appendage to her party.

There was an artless buoyancy in the conversation of Augustus that rendered it quite unlike that of the hackneyed diner-out and that of the professed wits, who appeared made up for the occasion; and Agnes thought she perceived under all his brilliancy, a goodness of heart and a generosity of nature which she had herself sense and heart enough to appreciate far beyond the qualities which merely afforded entertainment. There was likewise that congeniality of disposition and sentiment so often existing between young, lively, and virtuous minds at their first entrance into the world, which drew them together. She found in his conver-

sation all her own feelings expressed in much better and stronger language than that in which she could dress them up. Her heart silently acquiesced in the propriety of all he said, until imperceptibly he became the lawgiver to her feelings—the glass in which she moulded every action of her life; and she found herself perpetually thinking what he would say of this, and what he would think of that.

On his part, he was charmed with her naiveté, and his heart was flattered by her evident though silent admiration. In time, he strove only to shine in her eyes; and at any sally of his wit, he turned to her smile as the principle meed of approbation. In short, what with music and poetry, and congeniality of sentiment, they went on and on, till they found themselves passionately in love with each other; and unfortunately not with that evanescent passion, the result of a few quadrilles and fine speeches, but with a love arising from a knowledge of the qualities of each other's hearts.

Young and ingenuous, they were not long in coming to an explanation, or at least to an understanding of each other's sentiments; for feelings like theirs required no set forms of speech to make them known. Their eyes, the sound of each other's voices, their parting and meeting tremors, the searching looks of the one and the retiring glances of the other, soon disclosed more than whole hours of formal declaration could have done.

At length, however, the moment of declaration came; the tongue gave utterance to those feelings which the eyes had already expressed; mutual vows, such vows as pass woman's lips but once, and springing warm from the heart, were given and received, and they felt rich in all the feelings of a first and young love; and who is there that under this influence does not overlook every obstacle to its gratification? What difficulties does it not hide from the inexperienced or blinded eyes of the lovers! what path does it not smooth! what prospect does it not brighten!

It was thus with Augustus and Agnes. He felt that within him which might procure fortune, though he was not possessed of it; and she fondly thought that her parents would overlook this deficiency, as she was the only person who would have to suffer the privations arising from its absence.

Filled with these ideas, they gave themselves up to the indulgence of their mutual love, nor woke from their pleasing

dream until the third sister was married; and Lady Mary Dornton informed Agnes that proposals had been made in due form for her hand by Mr. Fleming, the only son of the rich Russian merchant whose wealth enabled him to outvie in splendour the proudest and the oldest aristocracy of the country.

Poor Agnes! it was some time before she could even bring to memory the person of this man, who now declared himself a candidate for her hand. He had sat unnoticed amidst the brilliant sallies of wit which graced her mother's table; and it was a long time before Lady Mary could bring to her recollection a very formal gentleman, who had twice asked her to dance a quadrille, and had three or four times taken wine with her at dinner.

When at length she did recollect a precise young gentleman, dressed to the very nicety of propriety, full of set speeches upon points of etiquette and appearance in the world, and was told by her mother that she must prepare to receive this gentleman as her husband in a tone that seemed so peremptory, as to take no denial and admit of no argument,—poor Agnes was thunder-struck. Her first impulse was to tell the true state of her feelings—but the words seemed glued to her lips; all she could murmur in her mother's ear was, "No—no—no," and she burst into tears. Lady Mary soothed her, praised her own and her father's anxiety for the happiness and welfare of their children, and spoke so much of parental tenderness, that Agnes began to think her heart rebellious and ungrateful to have a wish contrary to those of such kind parents.

CHAPTER III.

A STRUGGLE.

Why is it, Fortune, that we seldom see
Thy golden links with Love's fair roses twin'd ?
Why is it, Love, thou ever seem'st to flee
Those golden gifts, which, with thy power combin'd,
Might make a bliss instead of curse of thee ?
Is it because Love ever has been taught
His vows by Fortune are not to be bought ?
Or is it only that ye both are blind ?

OLD ALLEGORY.

We will pass over the explanation, and terror, and grief of the young lovers ; the sudden determination to fly from parents, friends, and the world, and give up all for love ; and the struggle with which Agnes brought herself again into the line of her duty. Their hearts, their feelings were in an uproar. At one time they determined to throw themselves at the feet of her parents, tell the devotedness of their love, and appeal to their mercy. At this period Mr. Dornton died.

The real grief of Agnes for the death of her father and the ceremonials of widowhood on the part of her mother, for a time suspended all other considerations ; Augustus's sympathy however in her loss only fixed the heart of poor Agnes more firmly upon him. She had one less to love in the world ; and the love which was thus deprived of its object, seemed to render that which she felt for Augustus the stronger.

It was during this period of mourning that the absence of company, and the comparative solitude in which they lived, gave Lady Mary the opportunity of discovering the true state of her daughter's affections, and her repugnance to the marriage with Mr. Fleming was accounted for. This marriage was, however, more than ever desirable since the death of her husband, and the before-mentioned jointure had become her only reliance, and she determined to leave no scheme untried

to accomplish it. The expensive life she had led, had totally precluded the possibility of any provision being made for Agnes; she therefore worked upon her generous feelings, by the argument of a portionless wife being a burden upon the talents of Augustus, and being likely to keep him in a state of dependence and poverty all his life. Poor Agnes felt that these would be nothing were they shared with him she loved; but her generous soul recoiled from the idea of being a clog upon the talents she admired; and she looked forward with something like dismay to the possibility of self-reproach, should any period arrive in which she might be an impediment to the fortune or exertions of Augustus.

On the other hand, Lady Mary sent for Clifton, and represented to him the injustice of his preventing the establishment of Agnes, while there was no probability of his having one to offer her—professed that had Agnes been possessed of a fortune sufficient for them both, that their union would have made her happy—nay, went so far as to say, that had her jointure not been so very inconsiderable, or had it been sufficient for them all to have lived upon it, she would have sanctioned their union, and given them a home, until his talents and exertions could win their way to the success they deserved; but her much-admired Mr. Clifton must feel, she said, that it was impossible for her to consign her daughter to poverty; and she was sure that his own affection for Agnes would prevent his being a party to such a sacrifice. She represented the luxury in which she had been accustomed to live; and contrasted it with the probable state to which her marriage with Augustus would reduce her, and portrayed her sinking silently and uncomplainingly under the contemptuous pity of her former companions.

Clifton felt the full force of all she said, and quitted her broken-hearted.

Agnes was thus separated from her lover, and left to all the schemes and manœuvres of Lady Mary; but nothing could work upon her to accept Mr. Fleming. She could feel it to be imperative upon her duty, not to act in violation of her mother's wishes, and upon her love, not to involve its object in the possibility of poverty and distress; but no consideration could induce her to accompany any one man to the altar while she felt her heart exclusively devoted to another.

Such an act appeared to her eyes but in the light of legal prostitution; she could not imagine that a mere ceremony of

the lips was sufficient to sanctify a union in the sight of God, without the sacred words were accompanied by the feelings of the heart. She felt herself in her affections as the bride of Augustus, and the idea of any other man as a husband was revolting to her mind. She could give up her lover from a sense of duty, but she could not consent to receive another.

Lady Mary, however, was determined to carry her point. She knew the female heart, and she knew the vulnerable points of that of Agnes in particular. She knew it not to be attackable on the side of vanity; that equipage and establishment had no weight with her in comparison with feeling and affection; and that to be successful, she must approach her through some of those generous impulses by which she was so often guided.

She was aware of her daughter's devoted love to herself; and this was the stepping-stone to the accomplishment of her project.

She began about this time really to feel the insufficiency of her jointure, and she made this insufficiency appear much greater than it really was. She invented distresses, which she appeared to try to conceal from the observation of Agnes, quite assured at the same time, that she knew and felt them acutely.

The other daughters in the midst of their splendid establishments forgot to realize their mother's project in obtaining them, and neglected her.—This she really felt herself; and she contrived to make Agnes feel it more. She then became melancholy—was discovered once or twice in tears; consulted Agnes on sinking at once from all rank in society, and when she saw that she had worked sufficiently on her filial feelings, she mentioned the generous proposals of Fleming—his unbounded fortune—the power it might have given Agnes of relieving an affectionate parent, and compensating to her for the ingratitude of her other children.

But it is disgusting to dwell on all the cold-blooded selfish policy, which actuates a mother determined on the sacrifice of a daughter. It is revolting to human nature, to think upon the many hearts immolated upon the shrine which the selfishness of relations creates; and upon the thousand schemes which are successful only in too many instances to subject their victims to temptations, which lead them into errors, to which the opposition of parental authority, upon such a point, would have been venial.

Suffice it to say, that the distress of her mother, and her

filial affection, at length so wrought upon her heart, that she first consented to listen to her mother's proposals on the part of Mr. Fleming, and at length to listen to Mr. Fleming himself.

She persuaded herself, that Clifton being lost, there was no other hope of happiness for her; and with her usual romantic tendency, determined to sacrifice herself for her mother; quieting her conscience on the subject of her love for another, by the intention of making an exemplary wife. Perhaps, too, unknown to herself, she was influenced by the perfect silence of Augustus—a silence that was tacitly insinuated to have arisen from the certainty that he had obtained of her having no fortune.

This idea she rejected, however, indignantly; but still the silence—the apparent and total abandonment she had experienced, had its effect upon feminine pride—(and what woman is without it?)—and helped her mother's schemes.

Poor Augustus, always in extremes—influenced by the arguments of Lady Mary, generously and at once sacrificed his feelings to what he considered the interests of Agnes; and having once come to this determination, he did it completely. But could Agnes have beheld him in his solitary chambers, gazing on every remembrance he possessed of their short and unhappy loves; could she have known of his sleepless nights—and have beheld his pale wan cheek growing hourly paler and thinner, not even the love she bore her mother—not even her high sense of duty would have made her relinquish him.

Well—Mr. Fleming was at length admitted; brought and formally introduced, in his character as an approved lover, by Lady Mary, and left alone with Agnes to tell his own tale.

As she coldly listened to his formal address, how did her poor heart sicken at the contrast between the set terms, the studied sentences, the etiquette of his declaration, and the fire and feeling of Clifton, when an accidental circumstance drew from his bursting heart the full and free confession of a first and genuine love.

But this thought was dangerous, and she did not indulge it. She reflected on her mother's reduced means—she anticipated something like the return of pleasure in adding to her comforts, and she accepted Mr. Fleming.

From this moment, all was bustle and importance on the part of Lady Mary. Paragraphs in the public papers hinted

at the approaching union—friends poured in with congratulations—her sisters, relieved from the dread of her being a poor unportioned dependent; all contributed to give eclat to, and to hasten the accomplishment of their mother's wishes. Agnes had scarcely any time left for thought; and she herself felt its indulgence to be too dangerous to encourage it.

Augustus read in the solitude of his chambers paragraph after paragraph, with initials the same as those which were inscribed on a pale gold ring, the only gift of his adored Agnes. As the nuptials approached, the papers spoke out more plainly; and at length, the approaching union of "the rich Mr. Henry Fleming with the youngest daughter of the fashionable Lady Mary Dornton," was openly announced. His eye was fascinated to the paragraph. It was in vain he tried, with a temporary assumption of coolness and a kind of hysteric laugh, to read it to the end. Something about Rundell and Bridge, and diamonds, and Brussels lace, and white satin, danced before his eyes. But he comprehended it not; or rather, his comprehension was so acute as to render him for a moment insensible to the extent of the agonizing information it contained. He threw down the paper—he walked to the window—he gazed into the Temple-gardens, and on to the Thames, busy with the hum of men—but he saw nothing. He strode back to his chair—he tried to resume his studies—he fancied that he could bear the shock with a fortitude worthy of a man of strong mind, and he burst into tears. The flood-gates of his grief were open; the full tide of agony rolled in burning drops down his cheeks: it was in vain that he bit his lip till the red stream mingled with his tears—'twas in vain that by a muscular compression of his forehead and hands, he attempted to obtain that iron rigidity of nerves necessary to restrain the ebullition of his feelings. The result of his efforts only ended in convulsed hysterical sobs, in sighs that were almost screams, and in ejaculations of indifference; the truth of which every tear and every groan denied. It was the final ruin of the first hopes which he had formed in life; the confirmation of the blight of his first youthful feelings and affections. And who is there that has not experienced the same agony that at this moment overpowered the manliness of Augustus Clifton?

He had vainly thought that his mind was made up to the event which he felt must one day or other be accomplished; he imagined that he had wrought his heart into that state of

insensibility, that would enable him to contemplate with stoicism the catastrophe of his first love.

Poor youth!—at three-and-twenty he attempted a task which nothing but constant collision with a cold-blooded world can enable any warm heart to accomplish.

Ashamed of the ebullition of feeling, he rushed from his solitary chambers, in the hope of forgetting his agony in a crowd. "At any rate," he said, "I shall there have pride to aid me in the repression of these womanish tears." He walked down to the courts with his heart burdened and sick; he forced himself into the bustle of the world. Here he found all busy:—every look important; every eye animated. Old barristers gliding about, loaded with papers which they seldom read. Here a young lawyer, delighted with his first brief, which he had learned by heart; and there an antiquated judge, jesting with his "learned brothers," while the fortunes of the suitors were depending on the charge issuing from his lips.

And there he sat among all his brother aspirants for wealth and fame, without the possibility of withdrawing his mind from the circumstance that rivetted it with a basiliskian tenacity.

"How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable," did all this bustle before him appear to his eyes! How did his heart sicken at the struggles of wigs and gowns for pre-eminence! and yet but a few short months before this period, he had entered this arena of forensic eloquence and of legal quibble—this bridge of sighs and tears for clients, and of fees and fun to lawyers—with all the high and animated hopes of youth. He thought his first brief but the stepping-stone to that fortune which was to be shared with Agnes; and the idea of her love, the hope of her hand, smoothed the passage from the bar to the bench. He already imagined a silk gown upon his shoulders, and a sergeant's wig upon his head; and considered these appendages as the main object of his ambition. How different were his feelings now! the motive of action lost—his occupation gone—he sat the victim of that silent agony of the heart, which made him wonder at the importance which all around him seemed to give to trifles.—For trifles did all the business of this world now appear to the eyes of Augustus.

At this moment an attorney put into his hands a brief. Augustus stared at him with an astonishment that quite sur-

prised the poor attorney. Recalled, however, to recollection by the circumstance, he attempted to rally the powers of his mind to the task before him. At this moment he observed a celebrated barrister just sitting down, after an able and animated speech—a reply, in which he had called up all the precedents which the Term Reports afforded, as evidences of his case; and showed the profundity of his knowledge, by summoning to his assistance every particle of our complex laws that was applicable to his argument—though he knew that the heart of this very barrister was bursting under the loss of a beloved wife, lying, at that very instant, an unburied corpse at that home of which she had been the beneficent and presiding spirit. The animation of his subject passed away as the advocate sat down among the approving murmurs of the court, and his countenance became immediately clouded by the domestic grief which weighed upon his heart. This was a powerful lesson to the young Augustus, that private feeling must give way to public duty, and that the common business of life must go on in spite of the private heart-aches which may oppress the individuals concerned in their progress.

Agnes, on her part, was not less unhappy; but feminine delicacy prevented its appearance any where but in the silence of her chamber; there she still indulged those recollections which a few weeks would now render criminal. She still looked on every token of her first lover's affection, as they lay humbly by the side of Mr. Fleming's more splendid, but far less cherished, gifts, on her toilet-table.

She had been gradually working up her mind to the necessity of sacrificing these tokens; but she still preserved them to the last possible moment, that she could retain and gaze upon them without a crime. She would not run the risk of communication, or of hurting the feelings of Augustus by returning them; nor would she hazard their ever being worn by any but herself. They were consecrated to the first and only love she had ever experienced; and she consigned them to destruction along with the passion of which they had been the tokens. At length, on the evening preceding the morning fixed for her marriage, she worked up her mind to the dreaded task—she desired her maid to replenish the fire in her dressing-room, and retire for the night.

For some time she moved restlessly about her room, without being able to assume sufficient resolution. She determined to curb this restlessness, and sat down doggedly to the fire. Her

eye fixed upon the rising flames, with scarcely less feeling than that which the victim of some horrid sacrifice might be supposed to contemplate the fire upon the altar on which she was to be immolated. From the fire, her eye wandered round the apartment; resting first on the humble ornaments, and a pile of sonnets, sent to her by Augustus; then on the more splendid decorations which glittered proudly in the jewel-case which had been forwarded that evening from Rundell's. The former had been slipped on to her finger, or clasped round her neck or arm by the hands of Augustus; each rendered dearer by a few hurried lines of poetry: the latter had arrived, accompanied by a perfumed note of compliment and ceremony. From these she withdrew her eyes, and they fell upon a superb dress of white satin, trimmed with lace from the looms of Mecklin and Brussels, and ornamented round the throat with swansdown that might rival the drifted snow in whiteness. From the cheval glass hung, carelessly tied round one of its supporters, a white satin Spanish hat, looped up in front with a knot of diamonds that sparkled brilliantly in the fire-light. She shrunk with a cold shudder from the contemplation of these dresses, when she recollected the use for which they were designed: they brought the sacrifice she was going to make more palpably to her imagination, and rendered the immediate destruction she contemplated more necessary than ever.

She seized upon the few ornaments she had received from Clifton, kissed them again and again—gazed upon them—and one by one committed them to the fire, which was now intense enough to accomplish their destruction easily. She had more difficulty in parting from the letters and poems. Each was an illustration of the heart of the writer, and of the passion by which he was inspired. Every line brought the moment of its composition fresh to her recollection, with all the vivid feelings which accompanied it.

The dearer, however, she found them to be, the greater she felt the necessity for their destruction. Wet with her tears, she threw them one after another into the flames; and they soon dropped in sparkling and blackened fragments on the hearth, fit illustrations of her darkened prospects and destroyed hopes.

As she watched the destruction of the first sonnet he had ever addressed to her, and which she had reserved till the last, a [illegible] of grief issued in sighs and groans from her overwhelmed

heart. She started—was it imagination, or did she really hear her sigh re-echoed in the direction of the window? She listened with breathless attention—a rustling, stronger than that of the night-breeze, seemed, for a moment, to agitate the trees which overhung her casement—a moan, louder than that of the whistling of the wind, seemed to meet her ear; and all was again silent.

Could it be possible? thought she—could it be?—no, no! the height of her window from the ground—the difficulty of access to the gardens behind the houses she inhabited—all forbade the supposition. She chid herself for having one moment indulged in it; and wept away the night in fruitless regrets of the past and gloomy anticipations for the future, and in vain attempts to reduce her feelings to that state of tranquillity which the ceremony of the coming day required.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRIDE.

Mark but the frame and temper of their minds,
How very much they differ. E'en this day,
That fills him with such ecstasy and transport,
To her brings nothing that should make her bless it,
Or think it better than the day before,
Or any other in the course of time.

The day appointed for the nuptials came. It was a clear bright morning in early spring; the stunted plants in the square which Agnes inhabited, had already put forth their half-grown buds in spite of the smoky atmosphere of the metropolis; the sun shone in at the windows of her dressing-room with a cheerfulness that seemed a mockery to the feelings within. The busy early world of London was on the wing, and Agnes's maid was decorating her for her wedding.

Carriage after carriage arrived, and set down the invited guests at Lady Mary Dornton's: all was hurry and bustle

and congratulation ; and the formal Mr. Fleming was gratified by the numerous coronets appearaining to various branches of his bride's family, which were assembled to grace the approaching ceremony.

In this wedding party there were no sly jests upon the occasion of the meeting, no significant looks and distant inuendoes ; all was decorum and ceremony—all punctilio and politeness. Lady Mary, divested of her widow's weeds, and dressed in a garment corresponding with that of her daughter, moved among the assembled circle, the envy of many an unsuccessful mother who had been angling for the same prize.

Mr. Fleming, with stiff ceremony and ill-concealed pride, received the congratulations which were poured into his ear, rendered more or less palatable by the rank of those who paid them. His ambition had been to ally himself with nobility ; and the crowd of titled cousins of his intended wife from the first to the sixteenth degree, for Lady Mary had assembled them all, convinced him that his wealth had purchased noble connexions by wholesale ; and his vanity was delighted to think that a little hour would see him the cousin by marriage to at least one-sixth of the coroneted heads of the kingdom.

It was with this view that he had been so pertinacious in his pursuit of Agnes : both by her father's and mother's side nobly allied, he had discovered, by the help of the peerage, that although they were the younger and the poorer branches of their respective families, the ramifications of their family connexions were so numerous, as to make them cousins of all the Howards, and the Cavendishes, and the Trenthams, and of twenty other noble stocks, (to adopt an auctioneer's style,) too numerous to mention.

He determined therefore in his own mind, to surmount his former crest of a bear couchant, with a lion rampant, rising out of the ducal coronet that belonged to a distant branch of his wife's family, and to substitute the rich liveries with aiguillettes, of the Dornton's, for the plain, sober, brown, city decoration of his own servants.

All these determinations took place in the mind of Mr. Fleming while waiting for his bride ; nor did her appearance, all beautiful as she was, in the last hour of her maidenhood, drive these ideas from his imagination.

His was a mind and heart untouched by the sacred fire of feeling ; the ethereal spark of existence seemed omitted in his composition ; all was dull dense matter : the whole exter-

of his perceptions reached not beyond the ceremony and etiquette of that society to which he had gained admission only by his enormous wealth. The greatest misery to himself, and the greatest crime in others, was to offend against that *bienséance* in the study of which he had forgotten whether he had ever possessed a heart.

The language of passion was as far removed from his powers as its feelings; he had no conception of marriage beyond its ceremony and the connexion he was to acquire by it. The kind of woman by whom these wishes were to be accomplished was nearly indifferent to him, and it was by mere accident that he found the opportunity of accomplishing them, through the medium of one so lovely and so amiable as Agnes.

Such was the bridegroom destined to lead to the altar a young and ardent woman, who had pictured her future husband as a hero, and a man of sentiment and talent; such the man to become entitled to all those warm and generous feelings which had been yielded with the ardour of a first love, to a man who promised to realize all her youthful anticipations; such was the frigid successor to the fiery and impetuous Augustus Clifton.

Agnes entered the drawing-room, surrounded by her mother and married sisters, and supported by her bridesmaids, whose laughing countenances, sparkling eyes, and rosy dimples, formed strong contrasts to the pallid and sunken cheek and dim eye of the bride, which appeared tearless from exhaustion, rather than from the absence of sorrow. A slight tremor ran through her frame as she was met by Mr. Fleming with one of his best bows—and the words "poor thing,"—"embarrassment,"—"agitation,"—"novelty of her situation," &c. were buzzed round the busy circle by her mother, to account for her agitated appearance.

The signal was now given for departure, and all the horses' heads were turned in the direction of St. James's; the bridegroom's carriage being the first, that he might be in readiness to receive his bride at the altar

At the first sight of the church the shuddering of Agnes returned; and she could not have experienced a more revolting feeling of terror and disgust at crossing the threshold, had the celebrated words of Dante

Voi che entrate lasciate ogni speranza

been actually written over the church-door.

In point of fact, it was to prove the tomb of her early hopes . what, when she felt it, was to become of all her young and ardent feeling ?—which of all her bright anticipations would ever be realized ? In a few short moments the very thought of them was to become a crime.

Supported by her mother, she tottered up the aisle, and, surrounded by the splendid and fashionable circle, stood in front of the clergyman, and in the face of that altar where she was to vow love, honour, and obedience to one, to whom, alas, she could only ensure the latter. That, she reflected, was in her power. She cast one glance on her mother ; thought upon the reasons of her devoted sacrifice ; bowed her head to the clergyman, as the lovely flower bows before the storm it cannot resist, and the ceremony commenced.

Mr. Fleming made his responses in a loud and sonorous voice, precisely in the same manner as he would have done at the Liturgy in the Morning Prayer. The officiating priest dropped his voice into a more piano tone as he put the necessary questions to the bride. Her responses, if she made them, were inarticulate and inaudible ; but she breathed hardly, and he was too well-bred not to imagine them made, as things of course, and proceeded.

An icebolt seemed to shoot through her heart as the ring which sealed her fate was placed on her finger ; and, as she sunk on her knees to hear the blessing and prayer which concludes the ceremony, she almost wished the pavement would open, and sink her into the charnel-house beneath.

The clergyman closed the book. Every head was bowed down, apparently in a secret aspiration to heaven—when the dead silence of the church was broken by one convulsive sob that burst from a distant part of the building, and sounded like the last effort of a breaking heart.

The bride started to her feet, and sunk senseless into her mother's arms ; they two alone, of all the assembly, knew from whose bosom the appalling groan had been extorted.

Every eye was turned in the direction from which the cry had proceeded, but there was no one there ; the galleries appeared empty, and many were the silly expressions of surprise and fear uttered by the young misses, and exclamations of " What can it mean ?" " Who can it be ?" that came

from the lips of the elder ladies of the party. Eau de Cologne and otto of roses were in great request.

The bridegroom only exclaimed, that it was very unceremonious and improper; and adding, that the canaille ought to be excluded from the churches appropriated to people of fashion, followed his bride into the vestry, to see if she was recovered from her fainting fit, and to perform the other ceremonials of the occasion.

Agnes was recovered but looked paler than before. Her husband now led her out of the church; and as she passed along, her eye was observed to wander in every direction, and to peruse every countenance that gazed at her, with an intensity which seemed to imply an expectation which she dreaded, yet wished to realize. As she entered the carriage, also, she gazed wildly among the crowd that surrounded the church-doors, nor withdrew her eager glance until the whirling vehicle left the admiring populace at a distance.

White favours were now distributed among the servants. Coarse jests passed from footman to footman. The different carriages, after a sumptuous breakfast, rolled through the streets of London, all proclaiming the ceremony of the morning; and the papers the next day announced that the happy pair had quitted town to spend the honey-moon at "Fleming-hall," which had recently been newly and splendidly furnished preparatory to the nuptials of the wealthy proprietor.

A few days afterwards, the same paper gave an account of the ringing of bells, and the rejoicing among the tenantry; and the barrels of ale distributed, and the oxen which were roasted in the village where Mr. Fleming's property was situated; and the poor misled world set down the weeping, trembling, heart-broken, and disappointed Agnes, as a happy, joyous, and enviable bride.

Years passed on, and yet her heart-sickness remained. She could not assimilate her mind with all the little forms and ceremonies which made up the serious business of Mr. Fleming's life, and which pervaded every thing he did. All the warm charities of her heart, in which her present fortune allowed her to indulge, were prevented from giving her the comfort she might otherwise have derived from the exercise of them, by her not being permitted to dispense them in any other way than through the ceremonious means of an almoner.

It was contrary to his received ideas of propriety, that Mrs. Fleming should come in contact with the peasantry on his estate, whom he never condescended to see, except at Christmas, or on some family occasion, when he would imitate older territorial proprietors, by regaling them in his hall or in his park.

Her mother lived but a very short time to enjoy the fruit of the sacrifice, which was thus rendered useless; yet Agnes still made an exemplary wife, though the pallid cheek and attenuated form bespoke the deep inroad which unrequited feeling was gradually making upon her constitution.

Perhaps there is nothing more wearing to the mind than that attention to minutiæ which meets one at every turning; nothing so harassing to the feelings of a warm and generous heart, teeming with all the best impulses of human nature, as to be trammelled with perpetual ceremony, and to be compelled to watch one's looks and words with a lynx-eyed attention, lest something escape that may not be strictly correct according to the established code of punctilious politeness.

Again, to have a confiding, affectionate disposition; to feel in one's heart the *soif d'aimer*, and to find the only person who has a legal title to these affections, so cold as to be incapable of exciting them, and unable to appreciate them, is sufficient to wear away the strongest heart, and in time to undermine the strongest constitution.

The birth of her children opened a source of delight to her; but this was again stopped by the many ceremonies which attended their education, and by the thousand absurd ideas which Mr. Fleming had imbibed, with regard to the children of people of a certain rank.

In short, Mr. Fleming was a man of mere minutiæ and ceremony; his very soul had felt the influence of his dancing master, and seemed to have been put in the stocks with his feet. He attempted to form himself upon the model of Chesterfield, according to the letter, and not according to the spirit of his system; and became a perfect specimen of an iced man.

His religion and hospitality were all mere ceremony without devotion or heartiness. His ideas of the one were satisfied by the exhibition of his person, and by making the responses in an audible voice, in a crimson-lined pew from a morocco-bound prayer-book; and the duties of the other

were performed by periodical state-dinners, in which the admiration of his guests at his wines and entertainment was more considered than the kindness of their welcome.

January and July ; Cayenne-pepper and iced-cream ; curry-powder and snow ; did not form a stronger contrast than Mr. and Mrs. Fleming: and such were the parents of Amelia and Agnes,—the one all FORM, the other all FEELING

CHAPTER V.

WATERING-PLACES.

Sir Henry.—I tell you, sir, the town 's a bore :—there 's not a biped in Bond Street, or a quadruped in the Park ; not a breakfast-table occupied at the Cocoa-tree, nor a newspaper read at White's ; not a ray of fashion or a breath of scandal from Hanover Square to Grosvenor Gate.—All the world, sir, is gone to Brighton.

MODERN COM.

AMONG the many follies of Fashion, "leader of a chattering train," which have influenced society in modern times, may be reckoned the absolute necessity there is, for leaving quiet, respectable and comfortable homes, to resort at a certain period of the year, to some water-drinking or sea-bathing place. In the days of the Spectator, and up to the middle of the last century, a periodical retreat from London to lounge in the Pump-room at Bath, or walk on the Pantiles at Tunbridge Wells, was considered quite the ton among a certain set of the then exclusives of society ;—all the rest, more wisely and more prudently, quitted their parliamentary sojourn in London, only to benefit their tenants and neighbourhood, by spending the recess, as English noblemen and gentlemen ought to do, upon their own estates ; while the shop of the tradesman and counting-house of the merchant generally formed the boundaries of their ambition.

At that period, there was not so much timber felled as at present ; nor so many decayed gentry retiring to the Con

tinent; nor so many merchants and tradesmen figuring away in the Gazette. Those were the days when fat oxen turned entire upon the spit, and barrels of old October flowed among a joyous and hard-working peasantry, when the heir came to the age of twenty-one.

Those were the days, when the squire and his spouse, or the lord and his lady, were the "Bountifuls" of the village in which their mansion was situated; when four or six long-tailed, sleek, and well-fed horses drew the family to church on a Sunday morning, guided by a coachman nearly as fat as his cattle, and dressed in a little curly flaxon wig, with a hat forming a triangle, the square of whose hypothenuse was equal to the square of the two sides.

Those were the times, when the steward's rent-day was held in the hall, where large joints of beef and mutton, and flagons of ale and stoups of wine graced the side-tables for the refreshment of the tenants; and when the rent-day generally found the said tenants with smiling faces and adequate purses to meet the moderate demands of the landlord: or should any unforeseen calamity, any great expense arising from sickness, or bad crops, have made the rent-money short, why the tenant came with what he could scrape together, and the remainder was either remitted, or a convenient day for payment named, according to the circumstances. The landlord too, in those days, was often there to shake his tenantry by the rough hands which cultivated his estate—to inquire into their affairs—ask after their dames and their families, and pay those thousand little attentions so grateful to the humble from the exalted: and the few who felt the payment of their rent a hardship, were thus frequently sent away conciliated and satisfied, and overflowing with praises of the squire's kindness.

The landholder's wealth in those times circulated around its source: the benefit of the landlord and tenant was mutual; the latter calculated on a certain profit to be made from the custom of the family at the hall, and this gave the former a greater certainty of his rents. The landlord, too, knew his own tenantry, and the value of his own estate from his own inspection, and not through the medium of a steward or solicitor, whose sole aim in its administration is to feather his own nest at the expense of both parties.

Such a secession as this from the life which his rank or public business compelled him to lead in London during the

season, added to his power in the county, and to his general respectability; while it saved a country gentleman from needless expenditure. But those days are gone by:—Fashion deemed it better to fly from the shade of the oaks and groves of their ancestors to scorch on the arid cliffs of the ocean.—Physicians wrote up the benefits of sea-bathing:—speculators built houses, warm-baths, libraries, and assembly-rooms, for the accommodation of visters. The pursuits of a London season were transferred to the sea-side; and a London winter was seldom finished without a series of engagements to meet at some of the mushroom watering-places, with which the coast of England has been covered within these last fifty years.

Large family-mansions with their splendid halls and staircases, oak dining-parlours, well-furnished libraries, and magnificient saloons, are shut up and deserted, for miserably built square houses with thin walls, through which the sun and rain penetrate,—perpendicular montagne-russe staircases, that threaten the inhabitants with a dislocation of their necks,—windows without shutters, and with sashes that rattle in every gust of wind till they make one's teeth clatter in unison,—boards that creak with every footstep—and furniture purchased in Moorfields, or Broker's Row; and yet their temporary inhabitants are content with these sorry accommodations, or rather with this absolute want of accommodation, merely because Fashion has prescribed a residence at a watering-place. Yes; those who would scarcely feel themselves easy in London, or their own mansion, or any *fauteuil* or *Boethema*, that was not turned out by an Orchard, a Gillow, a Graham, or a Tatham, are content with chairs, the seats of which would scarcely serve for the perch of a sparrow; with a sofa, whose cushions would be considerably benefited by Macadamisation; beds with scarcely enough feathers to cover half a dozen stubble geese; and pillows as flat as ham-sandwiches.

The mania, however, did not long confine itself to fashionable circles; those were followed by the professional man and the merchant, and these again by the shopkeeper, until there is hardly a grade of society, a portion of which does not migrate for the summer to some watering-place.

Those, who were formerly content with a lodging at Kentish town or Stockwell, must now go to Brighton, or Worthing, or Margate; and their suburban lodgings are occupied

by those who never, in the olden time, thought of any thing in the way of country, but a pot of mignionette or a scarlet-runner in the window, and an occasional saunter to Primrose Hill on a Sunday. Primrose Hill is, however, no longer out of town: the buildings of the Regent's park have extended to its very base. The poor citizen must go a day's journey from his confined place of business before he gets into fresh air or a green field; and a Sunday hack founders from fatigue, if hired from the middle of the Metropolis, before he gets on to a regular dusty, thorough-paced turnpike-road.

The cits, therefore, take their country pleasures not by retail as formerly, but in the lump; and so make a month's excursion to some gay and dashing watering-place, where they elbow their betters, and escape unknown.

The choice of the place in which this annual sojourn shall be made, is as various as the occupation of those who make them.

Your upper shopkeeper and his wife, who have been saving a per-centage out of the till with the view to this excursion, which makes them the envy of their less rich or more prudent neighbour, who confines the summer pleasures of himself and spouse to Highbury Barn and Kentish town, choose Margate; not only because it presents more entertainment in balls, theatres, and libraries, but because the convenience of the hoy affords a cheap facility of keeping an eye on the till, and of seeing how matters go on at the shop, at the expense of a very few shillings, and not much sea-sickness.

Your stockbroker chooses Brighton, because he can run down the fifty-four miles after Change, and be in town in the morning, time enough for all the Bulls and Bears, his contemporaries and opponents in the art of buying for money and the account.

Your "would be" genteel people, who would feel ashamed in the ensuing winter to answer the question of—"Where did you go last summer?" with the word "Margate," choose Ramsgate; that the vulgar pleasures of the other place may be within their occasional reach, to vary the ennui and constraint of Ramsgate gentility.

Young ladies and lovers prefer Worthing, Eastbourne, and the quieter places; which now afford, along the coast, little neat lodgings with dimity beds, pink curtains, white fronts, green doors, brass knockers, and Venetian blinds, and form the very places for flirtation.

Your lovers of the picturesque take a start to the Isle of Wight, for the purpose of pedestrianising to Bon-Church and Steep Hill; or if they are rich enough, stretch their flight as far as Swansea or Tenbigh, or the Lakes, that they may talk about the mountains and mountaineers of Wales—sympathize with the two famous female recluses of Llangothlin; or criticise and quote Wordsworth, Wilson, and Southey—write sonnets on Windermere; and fill their albums and diaries with sketches of ruins, descriptions of scenery, and details of sensations.

Many are the motives which take people to bathing-places; your invalid goes for health—your citizen for relaxation—your *ennuyé* for variety: some go to blow off the smoke of London by the keen breezes of the surrounding downs; others, under the idea of preserving and lengthening their lives, by pickling themselves in the sea. Various motives take various people; but Fashion alone took Mr. Fleming and his family to Brighton.

He never chose that season of the year at which the sea-breezes and country air are in reality the pleasantest; but precisely at that period at which Fashion has decreed that they are the most wholesome he never failed in his annual excursion, and more particularly when the presence of royalty attracted all the *attachés* of the court, and made it still more fashionable to be at Brighton.

To such a man as Mr. Fleming, one may easily suppose, that the nod of royalty was wealth and pleasure. He could breathe freely in the atmosphere of a court, because restraint was natural to him; and therefore he was never himself amidst that freedom of general society which sanctioned greater liberties than were accordant with his notions of propriety.

He was perpetually thinking that one person did not treat him with sufficient respect; that the freedom of another was ill-bred; that this person laughed too loud, or that another talked too long; that one interrupted him in the midst of his argument; that another did not listen with sufficient attention. He lived upon the minutiæ of society, instead of its general principles; and seemed perpetually to be separating the atmosphere in which he breathed, into the particles of which it is composed. He looked upon its constitution as upon a piece of mechanism, of which he only saw the cogs of the wheels fitting into each other as they revolved, without understanding the principles of the machinery.

But in the etiquette of a courtly circle, he was never offended. None could take a liberty, excepting those from whom a liberty might be deemed a condescension, and considered an honour.

In such a circle, such a man as Mr. Fleming was in his element; and as his *entrée* only extended to those general occasions where the etiquette is strictly observed, his ideas of courtly propriety were never shocked by that freedom of conversation and discussion which the urbanity of its chief always cultivated, and encouraged in those who are admitted to the more domestic circle of his interior.

Some few years since, Brighton was not the overgrown place it has now become, although even then it was the epitome of London.

On its Steyne, and along its open and sandy beach, might be seen the gay and gallant soldier and courtier mingled with the portly citizen and the humble shopkeeper. Muslin wrappers, and bright-coloured ribands were every day floating in the light breezes which came freshened across the waters of the ocean.—Young eyes and hearts sparkled and danced in the clear and bright sunshine, which added animation to the already animated scene that its cliffs and arid promenades presented.—Young ladies were seen equestrianising on donkeys to the Devil's Dyke; and elderly matrons airing in flies, with bodies which, in comparison with their carriages, appeared like unwieldy tortoises on the legs of a caterpillar. In short, Brighton was then in its infancy; and there was a lightness, a gayety, a nonchalance about its pursuits, which its subsequent corpulence has destroyed.

There were then no unwieldly building speculations to interrupt the expansion of views over the healthy Downs. No packs of half-bred harriers to tempt the equestrian dexterity of a citizen to attend the "throwing off," to the eminent hazard of his neck. No Chain Pier to invite the evening *tête-à-tête*, and to astonish by the lightness and science of its construction.

The visiters, too, were then contented with the "chicken" gaming which was prevalent at the libraries, where the utmost risk was a few shillings, and the ultimate gain a workbox of Tunbridge ware, or a smelling-bottle, which was devoted to some fair one by the fortunate winner. None had thought of setting up what are so appropriately termed "hells," or instituting club-houses for the admission of "exclusives,"

Every thing then bespoke an air of liberty and nonchalance; all seemed to be devoted to amusement. A meeting at a library or in a ball-room was sufficient to authorize occasional gossip; and morning rencontres in dressing-gowns at the bathing-place, was considered enough to constitute a temporary acquaintance.

True, on a return to town, the watering-place acquaintance was dropped. The parties we gossipped with, in familiar intercourse about sea-gulls and sea-breezes on the Steyne, or danced with in a Brighton ball-room, under the authorized introduction of an ex-military master of the ceremonies, were cut in a rencontre in Pall-Mall, Hyde Park, or the Exhibition.

The girl with whom we had condescended to flirt and talk nonsense, on a morning ramble upon donkeys to Rottendean, was overlooked when an occasional visit of her city papa to the opera placed her in our way in the crush-room, to which perhaps she had urged her family, under the hope of meeting her Brighton beau, and renewing her sentimental flirtation. little thinking that the circumstances, and conversation, and compliments, which had made a lasting impression on her memory, and grown into consequence by her repeated contemplation of them, had been the mere butterflies of a moment with him, as ephemeral as the breath with which they had been uttered, or the marks with which he had perhaps traced her initials in the sand.

Now, society at Brighton is on a different construction. There are no accidental rencontres and mere occasional acquaintance. People only speak to their own set; and a proper and formal introduction is as necessary as it is in London.

All this rendered Brighton the most congenial place in the world to Mr. Fleming. To him it was necessary to breathe the atmosphere of fashion; all other collision was disagreeable; and, therefore, though the quietude of their own estate would have been more conducive to the health of Mrs. Fleming, to Brighton went the family, with a cavalcade of imperial-crowned carriages, which drove up with the whole establishment to their house on the Steyne, to the great pleasure of a hundred attendant tradesmen, and to the delight of Martha Gunn, the bathing-woman, whose amphibious appearance and extraordinary strength was at that period the asto

nishment of every Brighton visiter: she was the Moll Flagon of that day; and even Liston might have taken a hint from her in his unrivalled personification of that character.

Poor Gunn, she is gone off at last.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHILDREN'S BALL.

Come, and trip it as you go.
On the light fantastic toe.
MILTON.

Chassez quatre—cavalier seul—
Pastourelle—balancez—grande ronde.
D'EGVILLE.

ALL the family were soon settled in Brighton. The establishment was as complete as in London; for Mr. Fleming's wealth carried every convenience of life with him. In his house there were no make-shifts; every thing was perfectly well appointed, or perhaps too well appointed; for there was an appearance of study even in the modern negligence of his drawing-room and library; and with all these appurtenances of fashion, London hours and customs were, of course, imported likewise.

On their arrival, they found cards were just issued for a juvenile ball to be given to the little scions of the fashionable *elite* at Brighton. It would not do for the Flemings to be left out: their names were therefore immediately inserted among those on the list at the Pavilion.

Many were the joyful glances and beating hearts that hailed with gratified pride the arrival of the envied talisman that was to admit them to the fairy scene; and many the compressed lip and bitter look of disappointment, and affectedly careless toss of the head, that was occasioned by the necessity of saying "No," to the question of "Have you a card?"

By these anxiously expecting persons, every knock at the door and every ring of the bell was listened to with anxiety, and followed by disappointment and an emphatic "Psha" as the servant presented on his silver salver the card of some indifferent person Some contrived that their equipages should be seen constantly dashing in all the most frequented promenades—while others made bolder advances, by leaving their names at the Pavilion, to remind the inmates that they were still at Brighton.

The utmost number of cards had, however, been issued; and many who were left out immediately quitted Brighton for the time; thus at once framing by their absence an apology for their being uninvited, and withdrawing themselves from the enjoyment which their hundred "dear friends" expressed by their eyes, while they condoled with their lips on the disappointment.

To how many malevolent passions of our nature do the most trivial occurrences of life give the opportunity of display! They seem always on the watch—slumbering but not sleeping, and ready on the slightest occasion to rush into action.

All was now hurry and bustle amidst the milliners and mantua-makers at Brighton. Every shop made daily a display of new articles from London and Paris,,and many of the great fashionable professors of flounces and furbelows, either came upon voluntary speculation, or were sent for by the more fastidious, to reap their share, or rather more than their share of the profits of what the saints would call 'this vanity fair.'

The mammas and ladies'-maids, and governesses, did not devote their attention to the little silk and satin slips. and pink sashes, and lace frocks, of the little ladies for whom the ball was professedly given, without considering the dress of the mammas themselves. Ambition was not gratified that the children only should outvie those of their friends, but that the parents should also outshine each other.

> From childhood upwards we must say,
> We grow but greater children every day.

But every thing is for the best; and thus maternal and personal vanity, the one excusable, the other despicable, furnished food and employment to a number of persons who

were before idle and pennyless—who had been, either listlessly lounging through their empty show-rooms in London, or regretting a profitless season at Brighton.

One often wonders that the railers against the expense and luxury of the rich and great, never recur to the good which these expenses and luxuries produce. Where would be the poor artisan? where the labouring mechanic? where the thousands with no vocation whatever, and who get their bread by servitude?—without the luxury which the cynic and the radical would stigmatise by the terms "wicked and useless."

What a common observation is it among this class of persons to exclaim, "Shame upon the rich and noble of the land, who are rioting in the luxuries of profusion; who revel in the feast and bask in the sunshine of pleasure—while the poor are starving!"

What is so likely to give bread to those who want it, as the luxuries which produce employment? Is it not evident that the superfluities of the rich provide for the necessities of the poor?

For our own part, we never see the shining satins and waving ribands moving through a quadrille, without casting a thought upon the sums which their destruction keeps in action; never sit down to a magnificent dinner, or splendid supper, without thinking of the variety of pastry-cooks, bakers, butchers, grocers, poulterers, wine-merchants, and fifty other tradesmen, with their numerous servants and dependants, who are put in requisition upon the occasion. We consider luxury and expense, therefore, among the duties entailed upon greatness and wealth. By this means riches are distributed through all the ramifications of society, from the highest to the lowest; from the duke who, with silk-clad legs spread upon carpets of Turkey, slices his pine-apple or sugars his orange at night, to the sounds of Mozart or Rossini; to the dustman who clears away the peels and the parings in the morning, to the stentorian "Dust ho!" and the astounding tintinabulum of the licensed scavenger.

It is these indulgences of the noble landlord which enable his tradesman tenant to pay his rent; and thus the perpetual circulation is preserved and continued, flowing from its source, and gradually returning from whence it came; but like a generous river, having watered and refreshed thousands in its progress.

We beg pardon for a digression into any thing that may

be deemed an abstract subject, but we earnestly recommend a due consideration of the preceding remarks to those, who, from mistaken motives, are too apt to consider the luxuries of the great a useless prodigality.

From the high rank of Mrs. Fleming's family, from the charm which her talents, even amidst all the blight of her warm feelings, was known to spread over every circle which she frequented, as well as from the two boroughs which Mr. Fleming's wealth had enabled him to procure, and the ministerial use he made of his votes, his family were ensured from the disappointment which so many had occasion to lament; and perhaps the last was the most influential reason for his invitation.

Mrs. Fleming's maternal heart was gratified with the pleasure she anticipated for her children; Mr. Fleming's consequence was elated; and Lady Pomeroy's vanity excited, by the card which lay at the top of those which already crowded the porcelain tray that graced the table of Mrs. Fleming's drawing-room.

Many were the lectures and numerous the private drillings which the anxious Lady Pomeroy bestowed upon her favourite Amelia:

> Hands, lips, and eyes, were put to school,
> And each instructed feature had its rule:

and to do her justice on this occasion, Agnes might also have participated in her cares, but that her little heart was so impatient in her anticipations, that she could brook no control, and give no time to the necessary attentions which her aunt required.

Lady Pomeroy impressed upon the mind of Amelia the high and courtly personages she was to meet. Agnes could think of nothing but the dance she was going to enjoy. At length the wished-for evening came—the mysteries of the toilet were completed—Amelia and Agnes were paraded in the drawing-room to the great delight of the father's pride, the mother's affection, and the aunt's vanity; and away rolled the whole group with beating hearts to the scene of princely festivity.

During the ride Amelia preserved her gravity, and never moved from a position in which it was impossible to crush one of the fragile flounces with which her dress was deco-

rated, or disturb the long and beautiful ringlets into which her hair had been trained. Agnes, on the contrary, was wild with expectation, as numerous carriages dashed by their own, either going to or returning from the Pavilion; exclamations of regret at not having arrived, and of fear of being too late for the first quadrille, by turns escaped from her parted lips, as she strained her eyes to catch the first glimpse of the blaze of illumination which surrounded the Pavilion, and lighted up the faces of a thousand spectators, which the hope of seeing the company alight from their carriages had collected together

At length her impatience was gratified—the carriage approached the door—the noiseless steps were let down, and the names of Mr. and Mrs. Fleming and family were passed from servant to servant, till they reached the doors of the reception-room.

Even Amelia's quiet and controlled heart beat a little quicker as she was condescendingly noticed *en passant* by one of those sentences which are the cheap yet amiable commodities with which princes can purchase popularity; and even the impatient queries of Agnes were for a moment hushed to silence, as a royal hand parted the raven locks on her forehead to have a clearer view of the animated countenance which they shaded.

Every thing excited the wonder of Agnes—the splendour of the hangings—the *bizarre* costume of the decorations—the brilliant plumage of the painted birds which seemed to fly over the walls—and above all, the union of Oriental splendour with English comfort—all conspired to embody her notions of the magnificent festivals of which she had read in the Thousand and One Nights, and the Tales of the Genii.

By the by, Sheridan used to say of the first, that they were read twice with equal delight; in infancy, with wonder and amusement, and in manhood, with instruction, as the best illustrations of Eastern manners and customs.

Royalty, rank, splendour, every thing was, however, forgotten by Agnes the moment her heart felt (for her heart *did* feel them) the exhilarating sounds of the harp and the mirthful notes of the violins.

Quadrilles were soon formed—every thing was so well arranged, that none wanted partners—all the yonng party were assembled, and the dancing was about to commence.—Amelia advanced to her set with the dignity of a peacock—

Agnes sprang to her place with the agility of a fawn; and to the annoyance of Lady Pomeroy, burst the white sandal which was gracefully crossed over her taper ancle. The two ribands lay about half a yard upon the ground like streamers. But Agnes, quite unabashed, and not seeing the frowns of her aunt, soon disentangled her shoe from the stray ribands, and was in a moment with all her heart and soul in the mysteries of the *chassée*, *la trenise*, and *grande ronde*.

All the parents and spectators arranged themselves around the room appropriated to dancing, so that they commanded a full view of the young votaries of Terpsichore; each one anxious for the success of their little *protegées*, many of whom had never exhibited any where but in the school-room, with D'Egville or Mrs. Elliston watching the progress of their steps, and correcting all their little *faux pas* as soon as they were committed.

An assembly of children with animated and smiling countenances—their eyes lighted up with pleasure—and all engaged in innocent amusement, is a beautiful sight. The careless hilarity, the absence of restraint, the lip, as yet unused to any thing but smiles; and the eye, yet unsullied by any tear, except those springing from the momentary vexations of the nursery and the school-room, give an interest to juvenile parties which others cannot possess. The contemplation carries us back to childhood—we again live over our infant years—we recollect our own infantine delight at the first ball we were permitted to attend—the effects of the fairy scene upon our young minds—our astonishment at the variety of things which have since become common to us—the pride with which we heard a murmur of approbation at some well-executed *entrechat*, (for there is no period of life when we are insensible to praise, or quite free from vanity:) we recollect, in short, when we were as careless, and happy, and (what was better) as innocent as the children before us; and the recollection is as interesting as it is melancholy.

Perhaps a juvenile assembly of this kind derives its principal interest from the innocence of the parties of which it is composed. It is an assemblage of youth not yet *usé* in the world—of hearts upon which envy, avarice, dissipation, and profligacy, have yet made no inroads,—whose minds are still like the pure pages in Locke's system of the human understanding, yet unblotted by the sad experience of life. It is an assemblage of lips and hearts unacquainted with worldly

sorrow or guilty pleasure, dancing over paths of flowers which precede the rougher track of more advanced life, and whose perspective of existence is bounded by the vacation, which releases them from the control of the school-room, by any little pleasure that has been promised, or any trivial punishment that has been threatened.

An additional interest to the present party was given by the idea, that the boys who were here dancing with infantine carelessness, were those who, when men, would most likely be our senators, our generals, and our rulers ; for it is from this class of society that they are principally chosen ; though fortunately we do live in a country, where honours are open to all, and the path to riches and fame closed upon none, who have talent to enter it, and energy and perseverance to pursue it.

Amelia moved through all her steps with the grace and precision of a proficient. Agnes bounded through her part in the dance as though her heart kept company with her feet. Her eyes sparkled with delight—every energy of which her little form was capable was in full exertion. Her ringlets waved unrestrained around her forehead and shoulders, and she seemed completely in that state which the French call *abandonnement ;* and in the midst of all, she was perfectly unconscious of the admiration which her animated display was exciting. At length, her quadrille over, she had leisure to attend to her partner, and for the first time felt, from his height, and the superior quietness of his manners, that he was more of a man than his companions.

For a moment, a slight sense of, she knew not what, lighted up her countenance with a blush of consciousness which most intelligibly said, " What can he think of me ?" He had, however, been delighted with the heart and soul which she had infused into every thing she did ; and as he drew her arm within his, paid her his boyish compliments with an air which, at the same time that it showed he considered her as a mere child, seemed to say, he began to think *himself* arrived at the first stage of manhood.

At first Agnes was a little dashed with this appearance of superiority ; but it soon wore off. As the first ice which her partner handed her diminished, so faded the ice between herself and him. A thousand questions were asked and answered. " Do you like dancing ?"—" Oh amazingly !" and " Who is this ? and who is that ?"—and " What is this ? and

what is that ?" as a thousand curiosities attracted her attention. From these subjects they passed to others of more immediate interest to themselves. The whole of their own little histories were detailed to each other. Before their ice and quadrille was ended, Agnes had told her partner all the secrets of her nursery—the plagues of her governess, with her *régime*—her calisthenics—and her ceremonies—her fear of her papa and her devoted love for her mother. The Honourable Master Trevor had sense enough to enjoy the openness and sincerity of heart with which all this childish detail was made, and, in return, informed his now listening companion, that he was an Eton boy ; proudly boasted of his exploits at cricket and the last Montem—of his excursions to Windsor—and all the numerous tricks in which he had joined his school companions, and the jeopardy in which they placed him ; to all of which the interested Agnes listened with nearly as much attention, as we may suppose Desdemona paid to the "hair-breadth 'scapes" of Othello.

In the mean time, Amelia passed through the evening entirely to the satisfaction of Lady Pomeroy, and when the banquet was announced, displayed her ringlets and her dress free from the slightest disarrangement, and a cheek quite unheated from dancing.

Agnes, on the contrary, with a glowing cheek, and panting from exertion, again took the arm of Trevor, who folded her shawl over her shoulders with a grace that would have done honour to three-and-twenty, instead of fifteen, which were all the summers he had yet numbered—and life had, as yet, been summer to him. The liveliness of the one, and the attention of the other, had been a source of attraction to each of these young people ; and with that incipient feeling, which in after-life grows into flirtation, they had agreed, early in the evening, to manage matters so as to sit next to each other at supper.

The shawl was made the convenience to accomplish this, and they followed the crowd, and placed themselves at the table with hearts, in which there was not one feeling discordant with the gayety which pervaded the scene.

How different from those who contemplated them ! how many anxious and corroded hearts ; how many grievous feelings ; how many fears of the loss of royal favour ; and how many hopes of supplanting each other, were concealed under

the diamond stomachers and necklaces, and blue and red ribands, and sparkling stars which surrounded them!

How lamentable, that in time, all those hearts which were then so light and gay, should become corrupted by passions which spring up in a court as in a hotbed! How melancholy, that the open brow should in time become contracted with all the baneful feelings of envy; and that court intrigue should succeed to all the emulation of excellence, which is the only characteristic of youthful ambition!

Amelia sipped her wine, and played with her trifle in silence, uninterrupted, except by an elegant inclination of her head, when one of her youthful partners challenged her to a glass of wine.

Agnes, delighted by the thousand forms of temples, cascades, pyramids, coronets, &c. into which the barley-sugar had been tortured by the confectioner's ingenuity, and which did indeed glitter in the blaze of a hundred wax candles, like fairy palaces of amber, could not conceal her delight, but rattled forth her admiration to the amusement of the courtly people who were immediately around her, while Lady Pomeroy looked and frowned, and nodded her head in vain.

At length the carriages began to be announced, and the unwelcome sound of "Lady Trevor's carriage is ready," struck upon the ears of Agnes and her youthful partner.

With childish delight they had enjoyed every thing together—all was pleasure—and they had never thought of parting, or dreamt there could be one unpleasant sensation attendant upon an evening of so much enjoyment

Young as they were, however, the moment of separation gave a pang for which neither of them could account, and which neither of them could understand.

Trevor tendered his hand to her for the last time, and was whirled away in his mother's carriage, leaving Agnes, to her great surprise, no longer the pleased spectatress of the magnificence before her. The separation from her partner had left a blank which there was nothing to fill up; from the almost romp, she became silent and pensive—the lights seemed no longer to burn so brightly—the pastry palaces had lost their claims to admiration—the sparkling of the champagne had evaporated—she became listless and fatigued, and she sat absorbed in herself, silent and sorrowful, and almost in tears, in the midst of that very scene, which a few moments before had so much delighted her; and listened now as

anxiously for, as just before she had dreaded, the announcement of her mother's carriage, which soon bore her and her sister to their homes, where sleep soon gave to them again the fairy scene of the royal revels.

Happy stage of life, when sleep and a few hours are sufficient to obliterate the greatest evils incidental to it—when our pleasures leave the heart uncorrupted, and when our sorrows are washed out by the tears they occasion—

Those tears forgot as soon as shed.

CHAPTER VII.

INCIPIENT FLIRTATION.

Oh! how this spring of love resembleth
The uncertain glory of an April day;
Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
And by and by a cloud takes all away.
SHAKSPEARE.

In the midst of the blaze of fashion, and of the strivings of envy, it was acknowledged on all hands that our two little heroines bore the belle at the juvenile ball. The mother's heart beat with joy at their praises, as well as at the contemplation of their pleasures. Mr. Fleming was delighted that they had attracted the notice of such distinguished personages; and Lady Pomeroy expressed in elaborate terms her pleasure at the encomiums bestowed on the manner, and carriage, and conduct of her favourite; and thus all parties were pleased.

At the school-room breakfast, Agnes resumed her wonted spirits, and chatted over the events of the ball, and her admiration of its splendour, with her usual *naïveté*, expressing all the delight she felt, and wishing that every evening would present a new ball for her enjoyment.

Little, at that age, do we imagine how soon the heart be-

comes satiated with such scenes; and how little do we understand the want of interest which grown-up persons feel for them. In childhood, we think their enjoyment is to last for ever; and we only wonder, that those who have all these pleasures at command, from being free from the control of governesses and parents, seem so little to enjoy them. But pleasures are like pastry—a child looking at the tempting show of a confectioner's shop wishes itself grown up, that it may enjoy the sweets to repletion. The time when our purse and our power to accomplish this arrives, and we find the wish no longer in existence. Tarts, jellies, and sweetmeats have lost their powers of temptation; the heart and its passions have come into play; and the lesser appetites and senses are forgotten amidst the *bruyant* enjoyment or the despairing disappointment of the nobler or the guiltier feelings of our nature.

Yet in these early days, it is but natural to imagine that there must be dispositions from which the future character may be prophesied. The courage of the boy may speak the future hero—his perseverance and industry in life, of the future accumulation of wealth—his acuteness or aptness at calculation, speak the future financier or the embryo mathematician: while the girl, in her attention to her dolls in the nursery, or in her devotion to her looking-glass as she trims her infant curls, may designate the future mother of a family, or show the incipient coquette.

We have often thought that an inquiry into the infancy and childhood of those who have been celebrated on the theatre of the world, and who have played the prominent parts of life's drama, would afford a most interesting speculation to the philosopher, and a great developement of the progress of the human mind.

One is curious to know, whether the childhood of a Bacon, a Newton, or a Boyle, displayed any of the incipient characteristics of the great and sublime pursuits which rendered them afterwards so celebrated as philosophers; whether Buonaparte, as a boy among his comrades, gave any signs of that grasping ambition and that indomitable character which raised him, and his country through him, to an unparalleled pitch of greatness, and which ended in the signal defeat of France and her armies, and of the imprisonment and death of himself, as a miserable, solitary exile, with scarcely the power to ride over a league of ground, after having reigned

over one of the most flourishing empires of Europe, and given laws to every other kingdom it contained—save *one*.

One would like to know, whether the infant years of a Staël, or of a Wolstoncraft, gave any tokens among their nursery playmates of that strength and manliness of mind, which in the one led to the most successful efforts in literature and philosophy, and in the other to that glaring defiance of established customs and conventional ideas of propriety, which she set at nought by her actions, while she defended those actions by her pen.

Again, in casting our eyes over the numerous catalogue of human crimes and frailties; over the list of those who have perished on the scaffold, or have died the more painful and lingering death, the result of blasted character and the world's scorn—one would wish to know if the germs of their turpitude were perceptible in the days which are generally those of innocence.

Whether the cold-blooded murderer, in after life, was distinguished by a peculiar cruelty to his companions, or to insects and animals, in his infancy—whether the forger and the thief betrayed any propensity to dishonesty in their youth; and whether the frail fair one who has passed the evening of her life as a *divorcée*, has been the mere victim of a temporary and overwhelming passion, created and directed by some master-spirit of a libertine; or whether her childhood had been characterized by that female coquetry and flirtation, which are but the embryo qualities of the crime of which they are so often the consequence.

It would be curious to trace the human mind either to the perfection of greatness, or to the completion of crime: to trace the hero from his play at prisoner's-base, where he domineered over his school-mates, to the battle by which he gains or loses an empire:—the murderer, from spinning a cockchafer or taking a bird's-nest, to the moment when his hand is died in the blood of the heart he has stabbed, or the throat he has cut; and the wanton and profligate, from the first germs of coquetry and vanity, to that period when she is the "scorned of all observers," and the admitted companion only of those who spare themselves the necessity of blushing, by living with those as infamous as themselves.

We really beg pardon for such a digression; but the contemplation of the childhood of our heroine, led us into a labyrinth of reflection from which we could not disentangle

ourselves without a few pages of discussion of the subject, by which we hoped to discover whether these children of our imagination were naturally described as showing so plainly the dispositions which were to give the character to their future lives.

Whether the present characters of Amelia and Agnes gave already indications—the one, of a creature all "form;" and the other, of a being all "feeling;" and whether we might prophesy those events of their after-life, which it is the intention of these pages to record.

The Trevors and the Flemings, although moving in the same circle, were not intimate: they met in the unceasing round of fashion; but they did not visit.

The Trevors, proud of an ancient name and of a family that could reckon sixteen quarterings in their heraldry, looked upon Mr. Fleming as a *parvenu;* and Mr. Fleming, with all his innate respect for legitimate rank, still felt the consequence and pride of wealth, and was offended at the little attention that was paid him by the Trevors.

For these slights, Mr. Fleming consoled himself by the superiority of his establishment, and by the splendour of his parties, while the Trevors affected to despise the magnificent entertainments to which they received no cards; and to consider and talk of them as the attempts of a *parvenu*, to hide the meanness of his origin in the gorgeous and tasteless display of the wealth which purchased his place in society.

It was true, Mrs. Fleming's family on both sides was equal with their own; but then a woman reduces herself to the same rank with the man she marries, but never elevates him to her own; and Mrs. Fleming was not a woman to receive attentions that did not extend to her husband, or to keep up connexions with any acquaintance that in the least degree slighted Mr. Fleming, to whom she made a point of performing all those duties and attentions which were within her own power to command, the more punctiliously, because she was conscious there were many into which she had never yet been able to school that heart, which had been won and lost before he had any claim to its affections.

These feelings on each side had kept the families of the Trevors and the Flemings separate; but the young people were of that happy age which knew not, or did not understand, these distinctions; and the next morning after the

ball, therefore, brought young Trevor to pay a visit to his little partner.

This was an attention, however, which was so much disapproved by his lady-mother, and so very coldly received by Mr. Fleming, that it was not repeated; and our young Etonian was compelled to watch for the Miss Flemings in their walks, as the only means of continuing his acquaintance with Agnes.

The fact was, that Trevor at fifteen, from his association with boys of sixteen and eighteen who imagined themselves men, began to think that he was himself approaching to the period when he might be designated Mister instead of Master; and having been really struck with the fascinating spirits of Agnes, he fancied himself in love, and began to think that he should himself have a confidential communication to make to his school-circle in return for those to which he had often listened, and wondered when he too should find an opportunity of performing the same feats as those detailed by his companions.

The house occupied by the Trevors was not so far distant from the Flemings, but that our youthful sprig of nobility could watch the movements of the young ladies: the moment, therefore, that they quitted the Steyne with their governess, was the signal for the commencement of his own morning excursion.

While within sight of his domicile, he wandered carelessly along the cliff; but still with his eye fixed upon the objects of his pursuit,—for he had learned a few of the *ruses d'amour* from his more experienced companions at Eton,—as soon, however, as he imagined himself out of the pale of observation, he quickened his pace, and directed it towards the little group of pedestrians on the beach, whom he soon contrived to overtake.

His presence was always welcome to Agnes, because it gave her the opportunity of talking of the juvenile ball, and was never unacceptable to Amelia, because he was never deficient in those attentions which her aunt had always taught her to expect as her due from the other sex; and Amelia, cold as she was, was much more versed in all these technicalities than Agnes, who was only to be taught the value of these attentions by her own heart.

When the governess was with them, Trevor knew how to make himself welcome by a hundred little flattering words,

which were rendered still more acceptable by coming from the lips of a little honourable; and when they were only accompanied by their maid, he remembered how maids had been silenced by his companions in the neighbourhood of Windsor, and he tried the same recipe. Boys learn something at Eton; and so they ought, for it is an expensive place.

By this perseverance, and these means, he contrived generally to be the companion of their morning stroll. He wandered with them on the cliff—picked up shells and star-fish for them on the beach - became an expert Macadamiser of pebbles—threw ducks and drakes on the bright calm sea—and made love to Agnes in his boyish way; that is, they stood on the margin of the tide, till the white curling wave rose to their feet, and then he would snatch her away before it could wet her black satin slippers—then he would look out for the prettiest pebbles and shells—climb the cliff for any flower that graced the sterile rock—or dash into the wave to rescue a piece of sea-weed from the retreating tide to add to her collection. But in the midst of these more boisterous and boyish attentions to Agnes, he never forgot to pay others to Amelia, which were quite as acceptable, since he never presented a pebble or a shell without a bow; and he became a favourite of her's, because he never met or parted from her without taking off his hat; and though she was shocked at the hearty shaking of hands, which was the never-failing accompaniment of the meeting and separation of Agnes and Trevor; and though she could never join in their hearty laughs which were echoed by the cliffs when the waves were too quick for them, and filled their shoes with salt-water; yet his perpetual politeness—his never-failing attention when there was a channel furrowed into the sand by the sea, or any piece of rock in the way to be got over, reconciled her to his company, and she always welcomed him with her placid smile.

As for Agnes, she knew nothing—she thought of nothing but the enjoyment of the moment. She delighted in the company of Trevor, because he entered into her amusements—all was gayety and sunshine:

> No sense had she of ills to come,
> No care beyond to-day.

Trevor himself knew not the nature of his own feelings; he was in a precocious state of boyhood. He had heard his elder companions talk of love, and boast of successes, of the meaning of which he was ignorant. He saw Agnes; his young heart and imagination were attracted by her charms of person, and her *naïveté* of conversation, and he thought it would be manly, and give him something to tell about on his return to Eton; having, in his own mind, determined to represent his lady as a girl of sixteen, instead of thirteen. With this view, he pursued with indefatigable perseverance his morning rambles, for the purpose of joining the sisters, till he experienced sensations for the youthful Agnes, that, young as he was, made his meeting with her a happiness, and his parting from her a misery.

Before he sought his pillow at night he would throw up his sash and look if there were a light still in her window, and his first glance in the morning was in the same direction.

Perhaps, too, his youthful vanity was flattered by the evident pleasure with which his attentions were received, and a zest was added to these meetings by the necessity which his heart taught him there was for some degree of secrecy, as to the extent of the attentions he was paying to this branch of the family of the Flemings.

He pretended to think, also, that he was really in love; for youthful hearts will magnify their sensations; and what he felt, though nothing like that manly passion which inspires us in after life, was set down by Trevor as love; and, naturally enough, he interpreted the evident pleasure with which the young Agnes received his little gallantries into a reciprocal feeling; and,

> Pleas'd with this flattering thought, the love-sick boy,
> Felt the faint dawning of a doubtful joy.

And which of us has not felt the same?—which of us does not recollect some incipient feeling of this kind, which threw a sunshine and an interest over our childish days? and ah—alas! how many are there, who can look back to this infant passion, as the only true one they ever felt; all the subsequent feelings of their hearts having the alloy of worldly interest to deteriorate and destroy them!

It is a melancholy thing to live in a world where the general result of experience, and the principal result of knowledge

is to deaden and repress the earliest, and, perhaps, the first feelings of our nature.

But a truce with reflections; they are no part of our narrative; and since we have arrived at a certain age, we have found reflection very intrusive and troublesome.

Thus matters proceeded at Brighton—the world came and went—stage-coaches increased—the town was full to suffocation—prosperity made the inhabitants insolent—visiters of fashion became disgusted—royalty deserted an ungrateful people, whose fortunes had been made by its sunshine—and Mr. Fleming quitted Brighton.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RECOGNITION.

——————She pin'd in thought.

——————Was not this love indeed?

SHAKSPEARE.

And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on.

BYRON.

THE London winter "commencing in July," as Lord Byron satirically observes, had now begun: the streets of St. James's rattled beneath the carriages of the wealthy and fashionable, and the dust of Hyde Park flew in clouds beneath the horses of the *elegants*, who equestrianised, and tilburised, and cabriolised, in the short intervals between a breakfast at two and a dinner at eight.

All was bustle at the west end of the town; the clubs were full of lounging men, and the milliners' shops were full of expensive women; balls and bible societies were crowded to suffocation; the crush-room was a perfect jam; fans could not keep the Blues cool at the Royal institution; and Almack's and the House of Commons were well attended.

In short, all London life was at its zenith of animation.

Parties both of politics and pleasure ran high and numerous ; corn laws, the balance of power, and the Catholic question, occupied the senator in the House ; while at the cabinet dinners the fate of Greece was discussed over a turkey ; the claimed independence of new empires acknowledged over the ephemeral spirit of champagne, or denied under the influence of more solid and sensible port ; extended empire in India was determined on amidst tureens of mulligatawny ; the slave-trade and colonial affairs canvassed during the digestion of preserved ginger, and while the rich Curaçoa still lingered on the palate ; and new alliances, defensive and offensive, commercial treaties, and all the other et-ceteras of diplomacy by which the fate of mankind is determined, were discussed at the dessert.

People of mere fashion in the mean time occupied themselves in the more important merits of a new opera, or a newly imported article—lamented the distress of their countrymen, and gave hundreds to some foreign fiddler—wept for the unemployed weavers, and ordered their dresses of French silk —subscribed for the relief of the Worcester glovers, but clothed their taper fingers in Parisian manufacture—wondered at the state of the English drama, and went every night to the Italian Opera and French play, while the national theatres presented nothing but a " beggarly account of empty boxes."

In short, all the world was occupied as though there were nothing but this world to live for. Trifles appeared, indeed, to form the sum of human existence. Folly and thoughtlessness seemed the general order of the day, and dissipation the regular disorder of the night. Nothing was heard but the din of double knocks, and the cry of carriages : flambeaux flashed their smoky flames around the doors of the splendid and the gay. The quadrille players were in full occupation every night. Cards and commands flew about in all directions, heralding a long series of balls, routs, assemblies, and dinners, and the morning papers teemed with daily descriptions of the results.

All the toad-eaters connected with the public press, and who are only endured in tolerable society from their power to give publicity to the schemes of fashionable attempters at notoriety, were in full request at the gay parties, accounts of which they were expected to furnish in return for the ticket which introduced them into circles to which they were entitled neither by birth, talent, or respectability.

The leader in the House of Commons had opened his budget of new taxes, and the leaders of *ton* had opened their budgets of new follies; the aristocratic committee of the opera had laid the scheme for the ruin of a new lessee; the *nouvelles chanteuses* and *danseuses*, had all made their *arrangemens* and *liaisons* with the patrons who had procured their engagements, and the season commenced with spirit.

Mrs. Fleming's table was already inundated with those pasteboard conveniences for visiting before the family were completely settled in Grosvenor Square, and she felt herself compelled, in spite of increasing infirmity, to enter on her usual winter life.

Neither the air of the downs nor the breezes of the sea had added to her strength; indeed they were both too sharp; her disorder had rendered her too weak to find any thing but mischief in their bracing qualities; but as she felt it must be the same every where, and that nothing can "administer to a mind diseased," she bore it all calmly, and patiently, and silently, amidst the absurd forms and ceremonies of Lady Pomeroy, and the apathy and technical propriety of Mr. Fleming. The more she felt the increase of her complaint, which was, unperceived, and silently, stealing her from life, the more intense became her anxiety for her darling Agnes. It was in vain, amidst her crowd of acquaintance, that she could look for one female friend in whom to confide her fears, on whom she could rely as a guardian and supporter and adviser of her child, when her own guiding spirit should be snatched from her.

All her society consisted only of such persons as came within the pale admitted by Mr. Fleming to be fashionable and proper; and the only one of her sisters who was still living, was a complete, but a mere woman of fashion. All her hope, therefore, and all her trial, was to live.

In the mean time, the different and contrasted characteristics of her two daughters grew with their growth, and strengthened with their strength. Amelia went on progressing in her music, her dancing, and her manners, and time only developed more strongly the ardent temperament, the acute feeling, and the romantic tenderness of Agnes.

For Amelia, her mother could feel little anxiety; life for her seemed destined to be a smooth stream in which she would sail safely with the current; she had no passions, no feelings to hurry her out of it: but for Agnes, it was far dif

ferent; with every accession of knowledge came a new sensation; every hour gave indications of a heart that would be the victim of circumstance, and every event of life had some influence upon her character.

It was in vain that her mother wished to repress the ardour of her disposition. The ethereal spirit of existence was too strong within her; she had imbibed too much of her mother's disposition to be guided by the formal rules that influenced Amelia. Her heart required icing by the hand of experience and misfortune, ere it could determine to believe that friendship and feeling were too generally names which engendered nothing but disappointment.

The necessary routine of London life, and such a London life as Mr. Fleming thought proper to lead, inevitably separated Mrs. Fleming more from her children than she wished. Still every moment she could steal from etiquette and fashion was devoted to them—or rather to Agnes, whose heart she attempted to school, but in vain, into some of those rules which by repressing its ardency might fence it against future disappointment.

About this period, there was a great deal of political discussion on the subject of our India possessions. Great extension of empire in that quarter of the world had been obtained by the British arms:—there were great outcries against the monopolies, the persecutions, the peculations, and the corruptions, which must always exist in large governments so far removed from the seat of the mother-country.

The House of Commons and the daily papers teemed with accusations and defences of the various parties concerned in the administration of that extensive colony. Impeachments were talked of, inquiries proposed, and witnesses summoned.

The Opposition tried all in their power to expose, and the administration all in their power to smother, any thing that could give a colour of justice to the clamour raised against their *employés*.

Mr. Fleming being a large proprietor of India stock, as well as a staunch supporter of the measures of government, was of course deeply interested in the question; and not only voted both in Leadenhall Street and St. Stephens, but filled his house by political dinners, given with a view to its discussion, and of course frequented the houses of those who were of the same party with himself.

Among other flaming supporters of chartered rights, and

of the propriety of extending our conquests by the force of arms, in short of every thing that could raise the price of India bonds, was Sir Frederick Rupee. The walls of Leadenhall Street resounded to his oratorical powers ; the nabobs, and rajahs, and their armies and their fortresses, were taken and conquered, and their spoils destined to the enrichment of the Company, in the plans laid down by this commercial politician.

He had been in India, and he understood the question. He had amassed a million in the service, and nobody could doubt it.

He, like Mr. Fleming, gave his dinners on the subject : and digested the legislative question with his mulligatawny. —proposed new campaigns, and praised old ones, with his curry—and drank to the confusion of rajahs, and the accumulation of pagodas, in his East India Madeira.

His plan was to gain proselytes : persons, therefore, of all parties were invited. Ladies added zest to the entertainments ; and many were the young proprietors of East India stock who were cajoled out of a promise of their votes on the occasion, before they had made up their minds upon the subject.

At this period of the discussion, when a great quantity of evidence was collecting from all quarters, there arrived from India a celebrated judge, who had gone out very early in life as a barrister ; and who, by dint of talent, perseverance, and integrity, had so won his way to opulence and fame, that in process of time he had been made a judge, and for some political service rewarded by the title of Baron Walmer—an unusual compliment to a judge in India.

He had exercised his judicial capacity in the East now some years ; and had devoted much of his time and influence to the amelioration and correction of the corruptions of the government, and in repressing the eagerness of commercial speculation, which, at the same time that it could only be gratified by injustice, he foresaw must in time lead rather to the weakening than to the strengthening of our empire in that part of the world.

In the midst of his legal avocations, he had made himself entirely master of a subject, which he was known to have investigated deeply ; and now that ill health and a large fortune induced him to resign his high official situation, and re-

turn to seek repose in his own country, his decisions upon the subject were looked up to with anxiety by all parties.

An eye-witness of the acts of government—an acquaintance with the manners, the customs, the rights, the laws, and the inhabitants of the countries in which he had so long been a sojourner—gave the stamp of truth, and claimed attention to any judgment which he had formed.

No wonder, then, at the board of India proprietors, by whom he was visited and invited—that ministerial and opposition members interested in the question courted him in all directions, or that Baron Walmer should be considered a powerful coadjutor to whichever party he should embrace.

But Baron Walmer was a man of no party.—He viewed the great question abstractedly, as it bore upon the first principles of humanity and justice.

He shuddered at the accumulation of wealth and empire at the expense of human life; and yet he felt the necessity of preserving our influence, and the protection of the immense quantity of British capital vested on the faith of the maintenance of our power in that country.

He also felt the danger of permitting other countries to obtain any footing, that might at any future period shake the foundations of our own empire in India.

But he felt all this as a patriot and an Englishman, and not as a merchant.—He felt it as a man, and not as a partisan.—He saw the benefits resulting from English government; and he saw the injustice and the cruelty of English corruption; and he determined to take no part, either in the discussions of Leadenhall Street or in Parliament, that did not tend to the exposure of abuses, the remedying of which he thought the best and surest method of strengthening our establishment in Asia.

His known sense of justice created the respect, and his resplendent talents commanded the admiration, of all parties. So that in all the society in which any discussion of India affairs was interesting—and this was very much so at Mr. Fleming's—the question of what Baron Walmer would say was always a matter of speculation and anxiety.

Little accustomed to feel any interest in the question, Mrs. Fleming, to please her husband, submitted to a great deal of society that was far from agreeable, which this subject introduced to her house; and Mr. Fleming told her it was his in-

vention to get introduced to Baron Walmer the first opportunity, that he might be added to their Oriental *cotéries*.

At length cards were received for a dinner at Sir Frederick Rupee's in Portland Place, celebrated for its India discussions, mulligatawny, and Madeira; and Mr. Fleming was delighted at receiving a hint that Baron Walmer had agreed to join the party.

Although from the high character for philanthropy and talent which the world had bestowed upon Walmer Mrs. Fleming felt much interest in his name, yet she would have declined the invitation. But Mr. Fleming was too well aware of her powers of conversation, and of the charms of her society, to go unassisted with such a powerful addition to the temptation which he intended to hold out to the Baron to visit Grosvenor Square, as his wife's manner presented.

In the habit of pleasing him, she stifled the effects of increased indisposition; and repressed those melancholy thoughts which latterly had been almost the constant companions of the hours devoted to society, as well as those devoted to rest and silence.

In spite of her utmost efforts, her imagination would recur to the earlier scenes of her youthful days; and call up in vivid colours all that she had then felt, and all that she had since suffered.

She anticipated a speedy conclusion to all; and she was already passing her hours in that kind of dreamy existence, which made her frequently forget and neglect the realities of life.

In short, her physical powers were unable to cope much longer with her mental struggles; and she found herself giving way to that kind of morbid sensibility which a long series of unrequited feeling is almost always certain to produce in the human heart. The day for the dinner came; and Mr. Fleming, in his eager anticipation of an introduction to Lord Walmer, exhibited an unusual degree of animation; and having intimated to his lady his wishes that every thing should be done to further an acquaintance with the Baron, retired to make his toilet.

Mrs. Fleming, more than usually melancholy, kept her daughters in her dressing-room till the last moment, and tried to be diverted by the sprightly sallies of Agnes, as she admired the ornaments with which Mr. Fleming's vanity had filled her dressing-case.

When the carriage was announced, she had some difficulty in separating herself from their embraces, and sighed that she could not devote the whole evening to their caresses.

On arriving in Portland Place, the principal part of the company had assembled, and were as usual dispersed in unconnected groups through the drawing-room, conversing on different subjects, and killing that abominable quarter of an hour, which is in many houses now extended to three-quarters, before dinner.

The ladies were discussing dresses, and the gentlemen politics; but all were in some degree anxious for the arrival of Lord Walmer.

To the India proprietors he was a hero; and the men were accordingly anticipating, in various ways, his sentiments on the subject connected with their interests.

The ladies, however, had different opinions. "Well I am sure!" cried one belle from amidst a group of young ladies, who seemed rather impatient at a delay which prevented exclusive conversation with some favoured swain, who was to give them his arm to the dinner-room,—"Well! I'm sure, I'm not so mighty anxious about an old judge."

"Oh! but Lord Walmer is not so old."

"Aye! but then he is as sensible, and that is as bad, and talks about nothing but India, and pagodas, and Brama, and Bombay; and I hear so much about it all at home, that I declare I am quite tired of the subject.—Besides, I like nobody who is not romantic; and nothing that comes from India can be romantic. Calcutta is certainly the very antipodes to the enchanting regions of romance."

"Oh!—But what think you of an Indian chief?—or a Brahmin—or a beautiful widowed bride, sacrificing herself on the funeral pile of a beloved husband?"—asked a young lady with blue eyes, just come out.

"Oh! that," returned the other, "is quite delightful; one might make something of a romance out of such persons and incidents as those;—but then the India Company is quite a different thing—they try to stop these romantic sacrifices—to extirpate the Brahmins, and to kill the Indian chiefs; or, what is quite as bad, to make them wear coats and *troisiémes*, which must spoil their figures.—But then Pa and the yellow people who dine in Harley Street never mention these romantic things; but talk about the price of tea, and the duty on shawls and Bandanas:—oh! 'tis quite horrid."

"Oh, yes! quite horrid—and then Leadenhall Street;—what can be interesting connected with Leadenhall Street?"

"Not half so interesting or delightful, certainly, as the idea of a fellow-creature enduring the agonies of death in its most horrid shape, through an absurd superstition," uttered a grave voice.

"There now—you are always so satirical, Miss Musters. To be sure, I did not think of their agonies; which I dare say, as you say, must be very great, considering they are burnt alive. But yet it is a very romantic idea; and shows great devotion to their husbands, and all that. Only think now, a beautiful creature casting her eyes up to heaven—then down on the corpse of her deceased love—then mounting the pile, she wraps a Bandana shawl gracefully round her beautiful form, and resigns herself to the devouring flames."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed the blue-eyed young lady—"I should think the fire would render a shawl unnecessary; and China crape hangs quite as gracefully."

"Oh! certainly—certainly quite as gracefully—and it would be a pity to burn a beautiful India shawl—they cost so much. But where can this judge, this Lord Walmer be?—I suppose dinner won't be announced till he comes?"

"I should think not. His presence is anxiously expected; and I assure you, in spite of your prejudice against those who come from India, you will find him a very interesting person," said Miss Musters.

"What! isn't he yellow?—and hasn't he got a liver complaint?"

"No—he is very pale; and his wan looks depict a disease of the mind, more than of the body."

"Bless me! how interesting! a disease of the heart instead of the liver! I quite long to see him. Have you any idea of what the mental disease is? was he ever in love? perhaps disappointed in some early passion."

"Whatever it might have been, he has not been selfish enough to suffer it to interfere with his duty towards his fellow-creatures: he has devoted a series of years to the amelioration of the state of the native Indians, and to the correction of the abuses made in that country."

"Oh! has he?—well—that is very good, I must say," drawled out the young lady, half yawning, and turning with some frivolous remark to her young companions.

This conversation had occurred in the hearing of Mrs.

Fleming, and she had become unconsciously interested in the person who formed the principal subject of it. A wish arose in her heart to see this Baron Walmer. At this moment she heard his name called out by the servant in the front drawing-room, and it was immediately succeeded by that bustle and subsequent silence which always follows the arrival of a distinguished visiter.

Dinner was announced so immediately after the arrival of the Baron, that no introduction could possibly take place; and the party was so numerous, and Mrs. Fleming, who never thought of precedence and etiquette when left to herself, went down stairs so much in the rear, that she never even caught a glimpse of his person.

The bustle attendant upon seating the party, and a recurrence to her own feelings, had banished the temporary curiosity which the previous conversation had excited, and she took her place without a glance in the direction of the upper end of the table, where she might naturally suppose the Baron to be seated.

All the common places of the dinner-table immediately commenced; wines were enumerated and handed—course succeeded course; and the confusion having a little subsided, conversation began to be more distinctly understood.

At this moment a question of considerable importance to the subject which was occupying the minds of most of the gentlemen at table, was put by the person who had handed Mrs. Fleming down to dinner, and who of course sat next to her.

The host immediately requested Baron Walmer to reply, and to give his opinion upon a matter, of which no one could judge so well as himself.

Mrs. Fleming was at this moment engaged in taking wine; and being in the act of bowing in an opposite direction, was prevented turning towards the speaker, to hear whom, every body was hushed to silence.

The Baron spoke—Mrs. Fleming started; what did she hear? The voice struck upon her ear—upon her heart:

> ——— 'twas like the stealing
> Of summer wind thro' some wreathed shell;
> Each secret winding—each inmost feeling
> Of her whole soul echoed to its spell!

She moved suddenly round ; the Baron's face was turned towards where she was seated ; their eyes met, and in an instant, Augustus Clifton and Agnes Dornton remembered and recognised each other.

The last time she had heard that voice was in the convulsive sob, at St. James's church. The years that had passed since rolled away from her memory. It seemed as though the church, her mother, her lover, were still present ; her head became dizzy ; she grasped the cloth with a slight shuddering convulsion ; the glass dropped from her trembling hand, and she sank insensible in her chair.

CHAPTER IX.

CONSTANCY.

For, boy, however we may praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wav'ring, sooner lost and won,
Than women's are.

TWO GENT. OF VERONA.

How little do they know of true woman who speak lightly of a woman's love ; and yet is it a fashion among poets, and novelists, and essayists, and philosophers, to compare female hearts and affections to any thing that is light, and volatile, and ephemeral in nature ! Thus, woman's love has been compared to the evanescent sweetness of the fast-fading flower, to the inconstancy of the moon, which "monthly changes in her circled orb," to the ever-shifting wind, and, in short, to every thing of which the nature is variable. Impressions made upon their hearts have been successively likened to the letters which the contemplative or the idle have traced in the sand, or to the bubbles and waves created upon the lake by a stone, which subside in a minute or two, and leave the surface as clear, and as bright, and as calm, as ever.

But how little do they know of woman who write and speak of them in this manner! How little do they know the deep and concentrated feeling, the never-ending memory of first impressions, of which a true woman's heart is capable; and how many are there whom we see pursuing and performing all the duties of a wife, who, having married from parental command, have never ceased involuntarily to cherish the fond memory of some early love, which they are supposed to have forgotten, because duty and propriety command that its influence should remain unperceived! How little do we appreciate that generous burst of feeling which a first love creates in a woman's breast, and which is seldom, if ever, completely forgotten amidst all the subsequent scenes of her life!

A man may have many passions, because his passions are generally the effects of his senses. He is captivated by beauty --he lends himself the willing slave of a feeling which he is in the habit of encouraging, and which he takes every means to cherish and to gratify. He succeeds--the gratification is past—beauty palls upon the senses, and loses its charms by being gazed upon as his own--another complexion, or another form, or another pair of bright eyes, and other flowing tresses, attract his attention--the same feeling is again excited--his senses are again led temporary captives to be again gratified, and disenthralled as before, by gratification. With man, half his passions are caprices. But with woman it is different. Education fences round her heart with the almost impregnable guards which conventional forms of society prescribe. If her heart feel a preference, it is her duty to repress it, unless that preference be sought by the attentions of another. Her feelings are germs in the bud, which require attention, care, and cultivation, to call into flower; they are blossoms which require the warmth of man's admiration and love to ripen into fruit. A woman's love is therefore seldom excited by temporary or sudden admiration. Her mind is too delicately constructed, for persons to have much to do with the origin of love in her heart; and it is this that makes the love of Desdemona a much more natural passion for a female than that of Juliet.

Passion springs up in a man's heart spontaneously and quickly, like those flowers which we see by the way-side, where accident may have scattered the seed in a light though fertile soil, and lying close to the surface, they blossom, and are blighted by the very sun which called them into existence

But in a woman's heart they require to be sown with a careful hand, and cultivated with kindly attention; but when once they have taken root, the fibres strike downwards; and though the flowers may be blighted by after circumstances, or chilled by coldness or unkindness, the roots are seldom eradicated. Like the vase in which roses have once been distilled,

> You may break, you may ruin the vase, if you will,
> But the scent of the roses will hang round it still.

It was thus with Mrs. Fleming. Her early love had been repressed by her principles, and her determination to conquer it had been aided by her high sense of duty and religion. Many were the struggles which she had with her rebellious heart and thoughts in the first years of her marriage. But time and active employment, the grand recipe, and, at length, a mother's duties, gradually lessened the influence and the memory of other days and other hopes; and to a common, or even to an observing eye, Clifton and all the circumstances of their short though delicious intercourse, appeared forgotten.

These feelings still remained at the bottom of her heart, deeply hidden, but still there, and added their influence, unperceived, to the other causes of the disease which was gradually wearing out her fragile frame, and sinking her to the grave: like the silent and secret working poison of Tophania, whose use was so common once in Italy, though its progress was imperceptible, its effect was not less fatal.

The generosity of Clifton, by never again appearing before her, saved her many a pang, and materially assisted her in the struggle.

Sometimes, amidst the numerous crowded parties to which she was led, first as a bride, and afterwards as being a part of those duties which Mr. Fleming thought his wife ought to perform, a stray glance might be hastily shot through the company in quest of an object which was not there, and a stray thought would sometimes wonder what had become of him. Perhaps the glance and the thought might create an involuntary feeling of disappointment; but her good sense acknowledged that it was better they should not meet; and she knew Clifton well enough to be certain that it was her he considered in thus withdrawing himself for a time from his usual haunts.

Too conscious to make any inquiries, she was ignorant that he had quitted his country; ignorant that having lost her he considered that he had lost every thing, and had withdrawn himself not only from the society in which he had lived, but from his native soil, to try his fortune, and seek a cure for a hopeless passion beneath other suns in distant climes.

Young and inexperienced as it was, Clifton's was no common mind; his heart had not been *usé* by those intrigues into which the youth of the present day plunge so early, and from which too many of them unfortunately form their opinions of the whole female sex.

He had loved with all the vigour of a young and first love. There was none of the namby-pamby sentimentality—none of that fritted feeling which so often characterizes passion at his age; it was pure, wholesome, manly love, founded on a thorough knowledge of the worth of the object; a love that promised to stand the test of years, and was not to be conquered even by disappointment.

That kind of love which would have guided a woman through all the storms of life; that would have grappled with ill fortune for the sake of her protection, and have mastered her in the hopes of procuring independence for the object of his affection. Clifton knew that he was loved; he knew that it was through no fickleness that another had been wedded. He was quite aware that her passion for him was as fixed and unchangeable as his own, and that nothing but maternal influence and a high sense of filial duty had made her relinquish him for another.

This, to a common mind, would have been a consolation, for most of us are selfish enough to feel a pleasure in the knowledge of being loved, even though the passion can never be gratified.

But it was not so with him; he regretted it because he knew it must add to her present unhappiness, and to the difficulties with which his own heart taught him she would have to struggle ere she could bring her feelings to walk in the path of her present duties. He felt it to be his duty to remove these difficulties as much as lay in his power, and he determined never to see her again.

How few men are there who would have done this! How many, conscious of being beloved by a beautiful woman who had been thus compelled to marry another, would have flut-

tered about her—watched for moments when, by signs, or looks, or innuendoes, they might have alluded to the hopes they had lost, and to the times gone by! For there is a selfish pleasure in this retrospection, which few have sufficient firmness of principle and enough strength of mind to forego; and a dangerous pleasure it is, since it has often and often led to consequences which were never in contemplation, when the mind and heart were first permitted to give way to it.

Clifton knew and felt all this; and knew that the best thing for both of them was decided separation. Bereft as he was of its principal joy, he did not meanly and cowardly give up life:—he had lost its sweetness, but its vigour still remained unimpaired. He felt that stir within, which taught him he was not born for an idler on the face of the earth. His love was lost; but fame still remained a bright object in the perspective of existence; and fame he determined to pursue—not as heretofore, through the flowery and seductive paths of poetry, but through the thorny labyrinth of his profession. Poetry, either to read or to write, at least when it is felt, softens and enervates the heart. Clifton felt it to be dangerous, and he avoided it altogether.

India, at that time, presented a wide field for professional exertion—a mass of cases and actions had accumulated from the extension of territory, and from commercial and territorial disputes of all kinds. The oriental vineyard presented a plentiful harvest, and there were but few labourers to divide the toil and the profits.

With some little difficulty an appointment was procured; and without the dangerous indulgence of seeing her even once again, Clifton quitted the object of his first love and of his dearest hopes, to struggle with his disappointed feelings, and to seek for power and fortune in a distant country. He lost not an instant in preparation, but quitted London, and joined his ship that was waiting in the Downs for passengers. The hurry and bustle of departure occupied his mind; and the first moment of silent reflection was that in which he found himself on the deck—and felt the motion of the vessel that rode proudly over the waves to fetch the produce of the East, to pour into the lap of rich and industrious England; and as he saw the sails unfurled, and watched the fast receding shore, he became almost careless of his fate, and could have exclaimed with our favourite living lyric:

Sail on, sail on, thou fearless bark—
Wherever blows the welcome wind,
It cannot lead to scenes more dark,
More sad than those I leave behind.
Sail on, sail on, through endless space—
Through calm—through tempest—stop no more;
The stormiest sea's a resting-place
To him who leaves a heart on shore.

For a moment he gave himself up to the bitterness of his feelings—for a moment dissolved into all the softness of sorrow. He soon, however, recollected how useless it was thus to give way to sentiments that ought to be buried in oblivion: he roused himself into energy—cast one last and lingering look at the receding shores of his native land, and breathing a fervent prayer for the happiness of Agnes, as they seemed to melt in the horizon and mingle in the distance, he turned with a determined though despairing heart, to the contemplation of a scene which it is ever the pride of a Briton to behold—the active energy of a ship's crew, and that admirable discipline of a number of tempestuous and warlike spirits, which has tended more to the high character of the British navy, than the stout oak of which its vessels are constructed.

There is something exhilarating in the activity and cheerfulness of British seamen as they climb the yards, unfurl the sails, and perform with dexterity all those evolutions which give to man almost the mastership of the winds and waves—something inspiriting in the hearty cheering, and vigorous yeo—yeo, that echoes as the various ropes are hauled into their proper places; and as the white sails spread their swelling bosoms to the winds, and bear the vessel proudly on through the blue waters.

Clifton felt it—it roused his sinking heart to energy: he contemplated the power of man; and as he observed that it controlled even the winds and waves, he determined that it should also control and direct the feelings and passions of his own heart.

A long monotonous voyage was, however, a dangerous trial: the want of variety in external objects is too apt to throw the heart and mind back upon the resources of memory for occupation; and the contemplation of the vast solitude of the deep, in which the single vessel that floated him on its surface seemed but as an atom, was rather calculated to encourage than to repress the feelings of Clifton.

A determined mind can, however, accomplish any thing

that it undertakes with energy: he knew that employment was the grand panacea; and Clifton devoted himself to the study of his profession, and to the attainment of all kinds of knowledge connected with the country to which he was going. These pursuits, together with the conversation of the intelligent officers of the Indiaman in which he had taken his passage, occupied his time, if not his heart, and left him little room for reflection on past circumstances.

Sometimes in the silence of the night, as he watched the rapid waters rolling beneath him, he gave a solitary thought to past times. The name of Agnes would appear to his imagination written in the dark blue wave that rolled so rapidly beneath him, or among the stars which shone so brilliantly and passively in the clear blue sky above him:—her beauties, her softness, the recollection of the first hours of their love, would then steal into his mind: his heart would melt as memory poured forth her store of scenes and circumstances connected with his disappointment—tears would rush into his eyes—he would forget himself, and for a moment give way to fancies of what might have been, and resign himself to a dreamy existence, from which he would suddenly rouse his mind—address a silent prayer for strength to resist the softening influence of these recollections, and betake himself to the severe studies of his profession.

Several times during the influence of these thoughts was he tempted to write: he could not bear that Agnes should think him totally forgetful—totally regardless of all that he and she had felt. But the sense that this would be a selfish gratification without any good, and the just knowledge that he had obtained of her leading him truly to suppose that she would estimate his feelings by her own, restrained him; and by the time of his arrival in India, her image was registered among the recollections of those whom he was only to think of as being in heaven.

On his arrival, he found plenty of occupation in his professional capacity; and the number of abuses which presented themselves for reformation, the number of injustices which it was in his power to remedy, ever gave him the best balm of a wounded mind—constant occupation.

At the period of his arrival, there was a great opening for an independent and upright advocate—and this Clifton was: the consequence was, his employment by all parties, and the subsequent confidence of the administration which intrusted

to his judgment many of the most important regulations for the government of the new provinces: in all of which, Clifton so managed as to beget confidence between the conquered and the conquerors.

These employments rapidly led to a fortune and a rank as highly honourable to himself as it was to the government that employed him.

At length a question of great political importance arising with regard to our possessions in the East, it became his duty, as possessing the best and most elaborate information on the subject, to come to England; and though his heart ached at the necessity, yet Clifton was not a man who neglected even a painful duty for the gratification of his own private feelings.

The banished and pennyless Clifton, therefore, after a lapse of fifteen years, returned to England the rich, the respected, and the talented Baron Walmer.

The sight of his native country recalled all the circumstances of his youth:—again the form of Agnes flitted before his eyes. But his feelings had too long been too well regulated to permit the slightest tinge of passion to characterize these recollections.

CHAPTER X.

THE FUNERAL.

> Such hearts as theirs were never pair'd above:
> Ill-suited to each other; join'd, not match'd;
> Some sullen influence, a foe to both,
> Wrought up the fatal marriage.
>
> ROWE.

Every thing had been prepared for the splendid fête at Mr. Fleming's, which he trusted was to identify him as the head of the party in Oriental politics. Nothing that his immense wealth could procure in the way of luxury and of costliness had been omitted; and all those who go into society with no

other views than those of killing time, or seeking entertainment, were looking forward with gay anticipations to the evening fixed for this splendid ball, which they were aware would be rendered one of the most brilliant of the season, by the taste of the hostess, and by the vanity of the host.

Poor Mrs. Fleming, acting upon the habitual impulse of her life, that of repairing the involuntary fault of not loving her husband, by the minutest attention to his wishes, had herself given directions to the various artificers who had been employed in the new furniture, and in the splendid temporary decorations which were everywhere scattered about the apartments. These works were proceeding with the utmost rapidity, even when their directress was brought into the house, after the death-blow had been given; and as she was borne to the bed in which in so few hours she was to be a corpse, her fading eye fell upon nothing but all these elegant trappings of vanity—these splendid preparations for festivity.

How changed the scene!—there were now no clattering of hammers, no officious bustling of servants hurrying to and fro with the appurtenances of a banquet—no busy upholsterers with damask hangings and silk draperies: all these were stopped, and were succeeded by those silent ones which prepare the dead for their last habitation.

Yet lovely and amiable as she was, Mrs. Fleming was no doubt much more regretted by the "numerous and fashionable circle" whose names graced her visiting list, because she died before her fête, than she would have been had she lived till after it.

"It was really a pity," exclaimed some, "that the preparations had proceeded so far." Others looked over their cards to select which party they should substitute for the supper rendezvous, on the evening on which they had promised themselves such a splendid entertainment at the Flemings'.

"Poor Mrs. Fleming!" was uttered by many a gay pair of lips; and the giddy utterers of the exclamation hurried on in the same career of endless vanity and folly: nor did one of them think of applying the case of Mrs. Fleming to herself.

Not one of them exclaimed inwardly, "So one day will it be with me;" not one of them considered that at some period or other, these would be the only sounds of sympathy with which the news of their own death would be received.

How it is that death makes so little impression, is one of the most unaccountable, and perhaps one of the wisest cir-

cumstances in human nature. For no poet ever wrote a truer line than Young, when he said,

All men think all men mortal but themselves—

There seems an intuitive idea in every individual, that the world could not go on without them ; and it never occurs to them that their death, even in their own circle, will make no more void than a stone cast into a lake. A few bubbles may be seen rising on its surface ; but they are dispersed by the next breath which passes over them, and all is smooth again, and the waters roll on as before.

Death had stepped in to stop the gayeties of Mr. Fleming's house, like the spectre of Alonzo the Brave, and had carried off the mistress of the feast.

There is something peculiarly solemn in death when it seems thus to shake hands with pleasure ; when it thus intrudes amidst the lighter and more frivolous pursuits of our lives ; when it cuts us off in the midst of vanity and folly, rather than in the performance of our duty, and without giving time for preparation ; when it thus almost strides into the ball-room, turning the lights blue, the sounds of mirth into mourning, and hurrying some thoughtless victim at once from the drawing-room to the grave.

It is true, Mrs. Fleming was not one of the giddy, thoughtless flutterers of fashion, who had sacrificed every thing to its influence. She had been a deep and silent sufferer, and her sufferings had made her turn her thoughts inward, and the insufficiency of the pleasures of her existence to fill her heart, had made her in some degree feel the necessity of looking for felicity somewhere besides this world.

Yet in the midst of her husband's pursuits, a great portion of worldliness, not in a sordid view, clung to her mind, and her intense affection for her children attached her to a life, from which she certainly was not prepared to part so suddenly.

The master-cord of that curious instrument, the human heart, had been struck too strongly, and it broke with the strength of the vibration.

Yet, as far as the strict performance of her duties to her husband and children—as far as a virtuous life free from a spot or blemish—and as far as an untarnished reputation and a boundless and overflowing charity could assist her, Mrs. Fleming was better prepared than most of us for an event of

so much import, and coming so suddenly. But it is too difficult a task in the midst of life, and health, and spirits, and enjoyment, to live as though we were in the midst of death.

The principle of life seems to be to drive away the reflection that there is an end of it; and if this idea will sometimes force itself upon us as the companion of some mental or corporeal pang, returning health, or some new vanity, soon drives it from our remembrance. Men in a field of battle, when the chances are rather in their favour than otherwise, and where their death is not absolute destiny, never see their companions in arms dropping around them without expecting their own fate in the next bullet.

How is it then in general life, where we know that death is our inevitable fate, that we can see and hear of it in all directions, and by a thousand means, that we follow one to the grave—read the epitaph of another—and can scarcely pass through a street without the melancholy memoranda of hatchments or closed shutters, that we never think of ourselves—never think that our turn may be next?

The glittering chandeliers, the splendid drapery and artificial flowers, and all the gay etceteras of preparation, formed but a melancholy contrast with the sable trappings of the chamber of death.

Alas! how little thought Mrs. Fleming the morning before, when she had expressed a fear that the flowers which were every where scattered through the apartments and verandes, would not live through the heat of the atmosphere on the night of her party, that she herself would be an earlier victim than they; that she herself would drop into the grave before the freshness of their transient blossoms had passed away.

The blooming orange-tree, the bright carnation, the crimson rose, seemed to rise in mockery at the frailer tenure by which mortality held its life and freshness. For they still shed their sweets, and spread their bright blossoms in the air, while the hand that had reared and cultivated them lay cold and senseless.

All the servants moved about the house with noiseless tread: all the formula of grief was strictly preserved. Gillow had received a *carte blanche* to do every thing that was proper according to the rank of the deceased; every thing was hushed and silent from the library in which Mr. Fleming and Lady Pomeroy sat in a kind of state grief, down to the steward's room and servants'-hall.

The customary suit of solemn black was ordered for all the household, and the silence was only disturbed by the muffled knocks which announced the numerous cards of condolence that poured in upon the widower and Lady Pomeroy.

Such were the outward symptoms of "funeral wo" for the departed Mrs. Fleming; yet, although she had been a most exemplary wife, a kind mistress, and a sincere friend, the only real distress evinced for her loss was exhibited in the nursery, where the little Agnes was literally overwhelmed with her grief.

The floods of tears that rolled down her cheeks—her convulsed sobs—her utter incapacity to attend to any of the common consolations offered by her maid, or by the governess, who, under Mrs. Fleming's direction superintended the studies of her children; all showed that young as she was, she had still years sufficient to appreciate the loss of a mother—a mother who had been her resource in all her little difficulties; upon whose bosom she had a thousand times been hushed to repose, when chidden by her father and Lady Pomeroy.

Poor Agnes! great as was her childish grief, as great as her little heart was capable of experiencing; yet, how little could her infant mind appreciate the measure and extent of her loss, or its influence on all her future life!

Amelia suffered too—but she suffered in character; a few silent tears stole down her quiet cheeks; but she seemed to feel the argument of the maid, that too much weeping would make her eyes red, and she therefore checked her tears, but kept up a silence appropriate to the melancholy circumstance. and responded sigh for sigh with Lady Pomeroy on her occasional visit to their room.

This Lady almost chid Agnes for the violence of her grief; but finding that she only rendered it still more violent, she retired, lest the sight of her tears and sound of her sobs should discompose her nerves, and render her incapable of administering consolation to her brother; her own was derived from receiving the cards of condolence, and giving all the necessary orders for the funeral, which Mr. Fleming determined should be as splendid as the rank of her ancestors and his own wealth authorized.

It was some consolation to him also, to read the paragraphs in the various papers in which his deceased wife's progenitors were named.

The leading foible of his soul was gratified, in spite of his loss, by reading, that—"On this morning early, the much-admired and universally respected Mrs. Fleming, died suddenly at the family mansion in Grosvenor Square. Her death is universally regretted by the world of fashion, in whose hemisphere she shone one of the most brilliant stars. Mrs. Fleming was grand-daughter of the Marquis of T——, by the mother's side, and of the Earl of D——, by the father's. She was first cousin to the late Duke of B——, and niece to the Countess of T——, the Marchioness of W——, and the Dowager Duchess of B—— ; and was connected by blood or by marriage with most of the noble families in the country. The immediate cause of her death was the bursting of a blood vessel, in consequence of a fit of coughing after the splendid banquet given yesterday by Sir Frederick Rupee. Mr. Fleming and family are inconsolable."

This was the account which gratified Mr. Fleming in the columns of the Morning Post, and other polite papers, all of which attributed her death to the same circumstance—the bursting of a blood-vessel : it was indeed the bursting of the greatest—the heart ! !

But who could imagine that the gay—the envied—the rich Mrs. Fleming, with every luxury at command—one of the leaders of fashion—one moving in the gayest circles of the metropolis—rolling over the streets in splendid equipages—and basking in the sunshine of prosperity—could die of a broken heart ?—and yet it was true !

A broken heart is not one of the acknowledged diseases of our nature ; it is never mentioned in the annual bills of mortality ; and yet it is a much more common cause of death than we are aware of.

How many neglected parents and wives—how many struggling through disappointment after disappointment, and hope blighted after hope, till nothing remains desirable in life, thus yield it up with a broken heart, while their death is attributed to consumption, or some of the legitimate and admitted causes of death.

The routine of Mr. Fleming's family went on as usual ; dinners were served in the dining-room, steward's room and servants'-hall ; for the great machine of life must go on in its accustomed course. No mortality short of a general plague arrests its customary progress.

The event was not yet so generally known, but that there

came several tickets for balls, and cards for dinners, to the deceased.

At night the inmates of the house retired early: there was a melancholy cessation from their usually dissipated hours.

A person was appointed to sit up in the next room with the corpse; and she as well as the rest of the household were soon buried in sleep.

All slept but Agnes; she still sobbed, and could not compose her grief: she however was put to bed, and buried her little face and weeping eyes in the pillow, still calling upon her mamma.

Unable to sleep, she sat up, and finding that her sister and their maid slept soundly, she stole out of bed, and creeping along the private passage which communicated with her mother's apartment, through which Mrs. Fleming always visited her children night and morning, and derived in their society the principal consolation of her life, she entered the chamber of death.

The sight of the pallid corpse as it reposed on the bed merely covered with a sheet—the marble arms extended—and the placid face, looking much more tranquil than it was wont to look in life; the tapers that burnt at the foot of the couch—the black trappings which were hung around, occasioned a fresh burst of grief from the agonized heart of the poor girl, and throwing herself on the bed, she clasped the corpse in her arms, and gave way to the bitterness of her agony. The grief of childhood, however, is not like that of maturer years. The agony which can give way to tears is much sooner relieved than that dry concentrated grief of the heart, which finds no vent but in the sighs that threaten to break it. So Agnes soon sobbed herself to sleep on that cold bosom of her dead parent, from which she had first drawn the warm stream of her own existence, and on which so many of her infant troubles had been hushed to repose.

How long she had slept, Agnes was insensible; but on awaking, she perceived with terror, a tall figure dressed in black, bending over the couch of death; his look was benign, however, though solemn, and the warm tear of manly grief stood in his eye, as he hushed her to silence, and still gazed intently on the corpse.

His cloak was thrown back; the light of the tapers shone on his pale features, whose manly beauty had not been displaced, but merely changed in character by his grief; his up-

lifted hands were clasped, and his lip seemed to move in silent prayers either for the grief of the living or for the fate of the departed.

Agnes would have screamed, but the touching solemnity of his countenance, the evident participation of her grief, and the pitying kindness of his look, took from her all fear, and she raised up her rosy, healthy cheek, still wet with her tears, from the pale breast upon which it had been pillowed, and with which it formed the perfect contrast of the living and the dead; and gazed on the stranger with wonder, not unmixed with awe.

As the tears rolled down the stranger's pale face, her own flowed afresh; and she permitted him, without shrinking, to take her from the corpse of her mother, to peruse her countenance, and to utter a solemn benediction over her, while he made an audible vow never to forsake the child of a mother who had been so dear to him.

He pressed the child to his breast, imprinted one kiss on her forehead, placed her again upon the couch, cast one more mournful look and almost agonized glance upon the corpse, and quitted the apartment; leaving the youthful Agnes almost uncertain whether she had seen a spirit or a human being. But she had gazed so intently upon the form and features of the stranger, that she felt she should never forget them.

In the morning Agnes was found by the attendants asleep by the side of her mother's corpse; and her tale of the stranger was received by her chiding aunt and father as the effect of a dream, caused by the exciting circumstances under which she was placed.

The house was now given up to the undertakers; a leaden coffin cased in mahogany, and covered with crimson velvet, decorated with escutcheons, in which the arms furnished Mr. Fleming, by the flattery of the Herald's-office, were blended with the more ancient and honourable shield of the Dorntons.

To all these minutiæ Mr. Fleming attended with peculiar care, as though he feared the gloomy tenants of the tomb might not be aware of the rank and pretensions of the deceased.

Nothing was omitted that could bespeak these, and make them felt and acknowledged by all who witnessed the formulæ of death.

At length the mournful morning appointed for the funeral arrived, and was ushered in by the tolling of the bells in the

vicinity—a noiseless bustle pervaded the mansion—carriages began to arrive from all the fashionable quarters of the town, as empty as the grief of their owners for the deceased ; and Mr. Fleming felt gratified, as he witnessed from his drawing-room window the long line of coronetted vehicles which were in waiting to fill up the procession that was to convey his highly connected consort to the tomb ; for even in this solemn moment, the ruling passion of his heart was paramount.

At eleven o'clock the hearse with its six black steeds and nodding plumes, all blazoned with the family escutcheons, drew up to the door which had lately echoed to the thundering knock of the visitants to her who was now to be borne away from it for ever.

The unruly mob burst through the officers who attended to keep the line, that they might gratify their curiosity by a sight of the splendid coffin, which was borne to the hearse by four of Mr. Fleming's footmen in deep mourning, assisted by two of the undertakers ; as the hearse moved slowly on, with plumes before and behind, and black clothed attendants on each side, followed by all the paraphernalia of funereal pomp, the coaches slowly took up those invited to the funeral : the long line of carriages closed the procession.

On their arrival at the church, the pall was borne by four people of rank. Mr. Fleming walked as chief mourner : the funeral service was performed by a bishop ; and nothing that could render the *form* impressive was omitted.

Chittenden had outdone himself; and Mr. Fleming was satisfied, and paid the bill of the funeral expenses, as the last honours paid to his wife's memory and his own pride.

Amidst the pomp and ceremony on this mournful occasion, there was one apart from the crowd, who groaned aloud during the ceremony, and who eagerly stretched forth his head to catch a last glimpse of the coffin as it descended by machinery into the vault. He was not an invited mourner ; neither did he come with the common herd of spectators. From the moment the church doors were open, he had taken his place in a retired spot, and had been observed by the pew-openers in earnest and constant prayer till the arrival of the funeral procession, when he had joined the mourners unobserved, and stood at no great distance from the coffin during the ceremony.

The same stranger, by dint of a bribe to the sexton, obtained the sad privilege of spending nearly two hours during

the subsequent night in the vault, where he was overheard to praymost earnestly, and to indulge in almost ungovernable grief.

A carriage and four waited for him at the gates of the church-yard, which bore from England—from his prospects, his duties, and his home—the Baron Walmer ; whose heart was the only one impressed with *feeling* during the glittering and mournful *forms* of the funeral pageantry.

As for Mr. Fleming, habit more than affection was violated by the death of his wife ; and he found his chief consolation in the pride which such a numerous attendance of persons of fashion and consequence and of their carriages had gratified ; and he immediately gave unlimited orders to a sculptor of eminence to prepare a monument to the memory of Mrs. Fleming. But

> Can storied urn or animated bust,
> Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath ?
> Can honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
> Or flattery sooth the dull cold ear of death ?

CHAPTER XI.

THE GOVERNESS.

> In short, in all things she was fairly what I call
> A prodigy—her morning dress was dimity,
> Her evening, silk ; or in the summer, muslin,
> And other stuffs, with which I won't stay puzzling.

Some few months subsequent to the funeral of Mrs. Fleming, as Lady Pomeroy and her brother were seated after a *tête-a-tête* dinner, in which there had been quite as much ceremony towards each other, as there could have been if they had been dining in state, the future education of his daughters became the subject of Mr. Fleming's thought and conversation.

A number of plans had been proposed, for nothing took place in Mr. Fleming's establishment without due deliberation, and the most trivial occurrence was always canvassed with a gravity worthy of more important matter, so that every thing might be done with propriety and *selon les regles*—which was a favourite phrase of Mr. Fleming's, and comprehended the whole ideas he entertained of virtue as well as propriety.

After a silence of some minutes, in which Mr. Fleming appeared to be digesting some important thought with his last slice of pine-apple—he exclaimed, "You are right, my dear lady Pomeroy, something must be resolved on with regard to the Miss Flemings; their education, as you say, must not be neglected—they are yet unformed and unfinished, particularly Agnes, whom I almost despair of seeing so accomplished as her sister Amelia promises to be."

"Oh! never fear," said Lady Pomeroy; "Agnes has certainly some of the prejudices of nature very strongly impressed upon her mind—the late Mrs. Fleming,"—this was uttered with a sigh, which was responded from the lips of the widower,—"you must be aware was herself rather absurdly—excuse the word—prejudiced in favour of nature. She had great ideas of the impulses of the heart, and rather encouraged the tendencies of Agnes to feeling and sentiment, which have really nothing to do with the education of a modern young lady; and which would certainly be great stumbling-blocks and impediments to their forming establishments in genteel society."

"True, my dear sister; my late wife,"—another sigh—"certainly had erroneous opinions upon this subject. She had always an idea that education had quite as much to do with the heart as with the head. She thought that nature could do without the aid of art—a hypothesis which the experience of every day's observation convinces us to be false."

"Right, brother; for do you imagine that the Misses Starling would ever have made the matches they have done, with all their beauty, but for the fashionable education they have received? would the eldest ever have created the sensation which she always did in society by her singing, if she had been left to warble like a nightingale untaught by Crevelli or Liverati? or would the second have secured her baronet, but for the grace with which she entered a drawing-room, and danced a quadrille? No—no—my poor sister-in-law was wrong certainly; for in these times every thing is

owing to the dancing and singing master. Manner makes its way much more than nature—accomplishments and notoriety procure husbands—and what other end can one wish in the education of young women ; or, in fact, what other end is there to be attained ?"

" Right, sister ; but you are aware that my poor wife had a great idea of being herself the directress of her daughters' minds. She thought where so much natural talent was displayed as in Agnes, that nature only wanted to be regulated ; and that all that was necessary to be done, was to give a right direction to her thoughts and feelings. I felt her notions to be Utopian ; but I was willing to let her proceed in her system, until she herself should discover it to be erroneous ; luckily for Amelia, she has been more under your care, and I certainly perceive the difference."

Lady Pomeroy bowed to the compliment, exclaiming, " Oh ! certainly, every thing depended upon education ; and with your permission, brother," said she, " as I shall certainly divide my fortune between them and my son, if they form establishments to please me—I will look out for a proper person to undertake so important a charge, as I feel the education of the nieces of Lady Pomeroy and the daughters of Mr. Fleming to be. For well educated they must and shall be :—I do not want them to talk about experiments, and retorts, and chemical concerns, as the Miss Deepdeans do—all of whom will no doubt marry professors of some nonsense or another with their natural philosophy :—neither do I wish them to be Blue, like the Miss Whites, whose learning and wit frighten the men, as well it may—for what have young women to do with wit ? But I would give them the best education ;—and the best education I consider to consist, in those attainments which carry young ladies with propriety in fashionable circles, in dancing, in singing, in the absence of *mauvaise honte*, and in a proper appreciation of themselves and their station in society."

" Quite right ; and how shall we attain this object, my dear sister ?"

" Why," replied Lady Pomeroy, " I have been consulting my friends, and have my eye on a young person, whom I think peculiarly adapted for our purpose. She is the most accomplished governess, Lady Betty Vincent says, that she has ever met with. Her attitude at the harp, her execution and style at the piano-forte, and her manners altogether, are those of

a perfect woman of fashion. Her last pupils, the Ladies Mary and Sophia Darnley, are both married, and well married; and this I think the most decided recommendation that Miss Wheeler possesess: and were we to have such a person now, she would give the finishing touch to Amelia at the harp, and most likely reduce the exuberant spirits of Agnes within the bounds of fashionable decorum, and counteract her tendencies to follow the bent of her natural inclinations. In short, I think that, with the assistance of such a lady as Miss Wheeler, my nieces might be rendered fit to come out in a very few years."

These were convincing arguments; and it was therefore determined that a note should be immediately despatched to Lady Betty, to request her influence with Miss Wheeler to superintend the education of the Miss Flemings: for Miss Wheeler never having as yet condescended to teach any "ideas to shoot" but those of the young noblesse, it was considered politic to secure the interest of Lady Betty to induce her to accept the situation.

"Besides," said Lady Pomeroy, "it will give the girls eclat, to have the same governess as the Ladies Darnley: the one of whom is a marchioness; and the other will be a countess, on the death of her husband's father, the old Earl, which is daily expected."

This was enough to determine Mr. Fleming to do every thing in his power to secure so desirable an acquisition. The note was immediately despatched—Lady Betty was most fortunately at home, and Miss Wheeler most fortunately with her; and it was accordingly answered by a little perfumed billet on saffron-coloured paper, expressive of her intention to wait upon Lady Pomeroy in the morning.

About two o'clock the next day, Miss Wheeler was ushered into Mr. Fleming's drawing-room, where she was received by him and his sister. He was himself surprised at the decided air of fashion which characterized her person and appearance; and could scarcely imagine, in the splendidly dressed lady before him, that he saw one who was about to become a dependant in his family.

The business of the interview was soon entered into The present state of the young ladies' education was explained; and Miss Wheeler spoke volubly, and eloquently, and critically, upon all the points of modern etiquette, upon

music, dancing, and the other necessary accomplishments and upon what she called the "*morale* of manner."

She quoted at length many of the sentiments of modern writers upon the subject; and above all, she cited the opinions of the Marchioness of this, and the Countess of that, and her dear friends, Ladies so and so, till both Mr. Fleming and Lady Pomeroy were delighted, and expressed their gratitude to Lady Betty for her recommendation.

With these sentiments, the terms of Miss Wheeler's condescension to become an inmate of Mr. Fleming's were soon arranged—a carriage at her command—whole and sole control over her pupils—a place at Mr. Fleming's table on all occasions—a sitting-room to see her own society in, and the employment of such masters as she herself should choose, were things of course acceded to; and after having been introduced to her pupils, Miss Wheeler took her leave, to prepare herself to take up her abode with them, to the great delight of Mr. Fleming and Lady Pomeroy, who spent an hour in enumerating the advantages of such a governess to Amelia and Agnes.

In the course of a week, the new governess was regularly installed in her new situation; and by the leers and observations of Lady Betty Vincent's coachman and footman, who accompanied the carriage which set her down at Mr. Fleming's door, they were quite as much delighted to get rid of as he was to receive her.

Miss Wheeler was, in reality, about seven-and-twenty; but by the style of her dress, aided by certain little operations of art on the cheeks and eyebrows, and a very judicious disposition of the hair, she did not appear more than one or two and twenty, to which she owned. Without being regularly beautiful, she had points about her features and figure which rendered her a very attractive person. Large dark eyes, of whose power she was perfectly aware, and whose natural fierceness she had schooled into languishing glances; jet black hair, hanging in glossy ringlets over her forehead, so as to hide the height of her too prominent cheek-bones; a mouth, the corners of which Lavater would have said bespoke ill temper, but that the lips were extended into a perpetual smile, to show a fine set of teeth; were the principal characteristics of her face; while her figure to all appearance was perfect symmetry, though rather upon a large scale.

The art of dressing to advantage she had studied critically; and appeared to know the defects of her own person, only that she might be able to conceal them the more effectually. She knew the precise effects of every kind of costume, and she had studied them all with a critical nicety—from the voluptuous undress wrapper in the morning, which displays by concealing beauties, to the splendid costume of the evening, when female charms are allowed to appear in their full dress.

The expression of attitude had been another of her favourite and successful studies: no one knew better than herself how to sweep a well-turned arm and white hand over the strings of a harp—how to throw up her eyes from the piano to the ceiling with an heir of enthusiasm—how to dispose her limbs more attractively on the elegant luxuriance of a sofa, or with more playfulness on the more lowly ottoman.

All women, if they consider their beauty at all, consider it with regard to the admiration it excites from the other sex, and the envy it creates in their own; but few knew so well as Miss Wheeler the ideas of men upon this interesting subject; a professed courtesan could not have studied their inclinations more closely; and by this means, there was not a point of her beauty or conduct that did not speak to the senses of those whose admiration she wished to attract.

Yet all this intimate knowledge of effect she could conceal under the semblance of elegant simplicity and fashionable carelessness; though in the midst of it, a nice observer might perceive the lynx eye with which she watched the success of her manœuvres.

Such was the governess provided for Amelia and Agnes, and no sooner was she installed in her situation, than the education of the young ladies commenced. Miss Wheeler, as far as education went, merely looked upon them as raw material, which she was to convert into any form her fancy might suggest. Accomplishment was the order of the day—display the great end to be attained: the voice, therefore, was an object of more consequence than the heart—the grace of the person of far greater importance than the cultivation of the mind.—The latter, Miss Wheeler deemed nearly useless; since she possessed the art of communicating to her pupils an "air of intelligence," which, in many instances, answered the purpose of intelligence itself.—And who, at one or other period of their lives, has not been de-

ceived by this appearance ?—who has not imagined an eye cast up enthusiastically to the ceiling, or fixed abstractedly on the fire, the indication of an intellectual mind ?—who has not taken the earnest gaze exhibited on the occasion of interesting conversation, for the effect of an inquiring disposition ?—and who has not been deceived into an idea that a subject has been perfectly understood, and sensible conversation perfectly appreciated, by a nod, and a smile, and a look, which, being interpreted, seemed to say—"Just as I thought ?"

Of all these little arts Miss Wheeler was a perfect mistress, as well as of all the accomplishments of display. Her execution at the harp and piano were unrivalled—her dancing the admiration of every body; and she spoke French and Italian with the volubility, if not the precision, of a native.

But she taught none of these accomplishments herself—her province and her engagement were, to superintend only: Mr. Fleming's house was, therefore, immediately inundated by foreigners, under the various denominations of professors of the harp, professors of the piano, professors of drawing, and professors of French and Italian. The only Englishman admitted to participate in the honour of "forming" the Miss Flemings, was an Ex-adjutant of the Grenadier Guards, whose province it was to see that the march of feet kept pace with the "march of mind;" and whom Miss Wheeler introduced as a professor of calisthenics, which, being interpreted, means the manual exercise of a woman.

Curtsey-frames, backboards, inclined planes, balance poles, and all the *et-cetera* of female gymnastics, were likewise put in requisition, that the "muscles of the pupils might be sufficiently developed," and all the feminine exercises accomplished, from the "simple pace walking" to the "simple pace jumping:" through all the system of "forward and backward pace in place;" "skipping and touching behind;" "crossing legs in place;" "zigzag step walking and jumping," up to the "high step," and the "high step complicated:"* in short, the whole science of female exercises, as developed in the ingenious essay of Signor Voarino on Calisthenics; which said essay as "accompanied by illustrative figures," was understood, by Miss Wheeler, from the tip of her toe to the tips of her fingers; and, as she re-

* The printed names given to the different exercises.

marked the elastic forms and movements of her new pupils : she told Lady Pomeroy, she had no doubt that, by the proper adaptation of the system, they would in time reach the acme of Calisthenic perfection, and perform "the *high step*, *double step*, *zigzag step*, and the *galloping pace*, running the same circle, and using the same means as in the *flying round*."*

As Lady Pomeroy herself wondered at some of the articles which she saw placed in the school-room, and, fashionable as she was, had never heard of "Calisthenics," her anxiety was excited; and she condescended to betray her ignorance of this novel branch of education, which Miss Wheeler explained to her by repeating one or two of the exercises, and illustrating them in her own person.

Some little old-fashioned notions of female propriety and delicacy which Lady Pomeroy retained, from having been educated so many years ago, were rather shocked, when she heard Miss Wheeler expatiate on the necessity of her nieces "executing with facility and by *principle* the movements necessary to develope the muscles of the superior extremities;" and when she read to her some of the exercises, in which, at the word of command, they were to "keep the left leg in its place and the knee stretched;" then, "by means of a jump, the left leg was to be brought forward and the right backward, performing the same movements with the left leg, and repeating them several times by means of the jump, changing the leg and arm each time."† As Miss Wheeler proceeded, Lady Pomeroy's eyes opened almost into a stare; but when, in the third exercise, she heard the word of command given, to "raise the right leg extended forward as high as possible, the instep stretched, the upper part of the body held back till it is set down, raising at the same time the left leg;" and in the fifth, where, at the word of "cross legs," the pupil is ordered "to cross the right leg over the left, the hip stretched," &c.; and in the complicated exercises, where the "knee is directed to be raised as high as the hip,"‡ even all her respect for and admiration of Miss Wheeler could not prevent the expression of Lady Pomeroy's surprise, at this modern method of edu-

* Vide a Treatise on Calisthenic Exercises, arranged for the private tuition of Ladies, by Signor Voarino, p. 64.

† Vide Treatise on Calisthenic Exercises. ‡ Ibid.

cation.*—To which Miss Wheeler, with her usual volubility, replied—

"Oh dear! no, ma'am; not modern at all. Calisthenics were in great vogue among the ancients, quite the *ton* in Athens, and the rage in Sparta: the body as well as the mind requires to be educated for health and elegance, from the intimate connexion of one with the other. Herodicus, ma'am, himself the great instructer of the great physician Hippocrates, was master of one of the Grecian Palæstric, or Gymnasia; and frequently remarked, that the young ladies under his tuition were among the most fashionable and elegant of his time—leading off the balls, and bearing the belle every where; which is just the case with the Ladies Darnley, Lady Marion Compton, the Marchioness of Desborough, the young Duchess of Dashly, and a variety of other ladies of *ton*, who are devoted to the elegances of Calisthenics, and performed the evolution of "flying round to perfection."

These names had much more influence with Lady Pomeroy than that of Herodicus. So Miss Wheeler was permitted to take her course, and every thing gave note of preparation for completely finishing the young ladies.

When Amelia and Agnes first entered their study, after all the apparatus of education had been collected together, Agnes took that kind of survey of all the before-mentioned articles, with much the same look as an inquiring spectator would contemplate the instruments of torture in the prisons of the Inquisition.

"What is this for?"

"To teach you to curtsey gracefully."

"To teach me to curtsey! why I can curtsey without that. There ma'am—won't that do?—And this?"

"To teach you to hold your head up."

"Oh I can hold my head up high enough,"—at the same time placing herself as erect as her little form would permit. And thus Agnes ran over every article in the room, protesting she could do every thing in which they were to aid her, quite as well without their assistance. Amelia, on the contrary, put her feet into the stocks, submitted her shoulders to the back-board, and curtseyed in the frame

* The whole of these exercises are copied VERBATIM from Signor Voa rino's Treatise arranged for the private tuition of ladies.

screwed up to the last hole, as gravely and seriously as though it were the most important business of her life.

Agnes in her turn tried them, but protested vehemently against the torture to which they put her hitherto unfettered limbs.

It was different, however, on the introduction of the professors of music and singing: whatever their morals might be, their music was good; and the young Agnes, girl as she was, exhibited herself a perfect enthusiast in sweet sounds. As brilliant preludes were struck with a master's hand on the harp—as the finest passages of Beethoven, Paesiello, Rossini, and Mayerbeer, were rapidly executed on the piano—and as Italian cadenzas seemed to float on the air from the lips of the "Maestro," back-boards and stocks were forgotten—her eye lighted up with feeling—her hands and lips moved in time and unison with the voice and the instrument—and she sat like one entirely absorbed in a delicious occupation.

No wonder, with such feeling united to a quick perception, and an aptitude at imitation, that she made rapid progress in this art, in which she took so much delight. Yet, even in her favourite pursuit, she was impatient of the prescribed rules, and would frequently dash at attempts without attending to them, and could not be called back to the acknowledgment of their necessity, till a discord struck upon her ear, and convinced her that some regulation of the notes was necessary. Could this have been the case with regard to the feelings of her heart—could a note of discord, or a moment of unhappiness have recalled her to the course from which her enthusiasm and temperament so often induced her to deviate, how much misery she might have been spared! But the science of human life is dependent upon no rules but those of feeling. Passion has no ear to call the wanderer back within the prescribed rules of society.—There is no discord attending its pleasures, till the pleasures are passed away; and there is no path back again, but the bitter one of repentance.

What a blessing would be the possession of that ring, celebrated in the Fairy Tale, which pressed the finger of its possessor whenever he transgressed the limits of prudence and virtue! Yet perhaps, like the prince upon whom this treasure was bestowed, there is not one of us that would not throw it away when its often repeated admonitions became troublesome.

CHAPTER XII.

LOVE MECHANICS.

With all appliances and means to boot,
She came with melting glance and sigh,
To teach the young ideas to shoot
With Love's artillery.

ANON.

No sooner had Miss Wheeler become firmly settled in Mr. Fleming's household establishment, and obtained footings and magnificent stipends for all the various professors who followed in her train, than she began to recollect that she was in the house of a widower, not yet past the prime of life; and to imagine that by cleverness and management she might perhaps turn her temporary establishment as a subordinate, into a permanent one, as the mistress of Mr. Fleming's family.

Miss Wheeler was, a woman of no slight experience, either with regard to her own or the other sex. She had been too long interested in studying the follies, and flattering the vanities of both, not to be pretty well aware of the weak and favourable side on which to attack them with the greatest hope of success; and where she had been able to discern the ruling passions of her employers, she had seldom failed in flattering them into an almost unbounded confidence.

By these means she had become acquainted with all those littlenesses of envy, hatred, and malice, by which, almost unknown to themselves, so many of the commonest actions of people's lives are regulated; and by flattering and gratifying these petty malevolences of her employers, Miss Wheeler had wheedled herself into a very powerful and numerous connexion of patrons and patronesses; and what was still more wonderful, without yet having sacrificed her character with

any of the former, or exciting the jealousy of any of the latter.

But Miss Wheeler was, in the worldly sense of the term, a truly clever woman, with an eye so sharply turned to her own interest, that even the very high passions of which she was undoubtedly possessed, were very seldom permitted to turn her from this main object. Dependent from an early period of her infancy upon, and educated by a selfish relation, who kept her in all the comforts which an ample annuity afforded, she was left, at her death, with every inclination for luxury, without any means to enjoy it; for the annuity died with her widow cousin; and Miss Wheeler, at twenty-two, found herself mistress of nothing but a very ample wardrobe, some powerful accomplishments, very high passions, and a fine person.

During the life of her relation, ignorance of her dependence, united to the influence of her personal attractions, had obtained for her one or two moderate offers of marriage, which she had spurned with indignation; and the hope of one or two more of a higher cast had been annihilated on the death which left her destitute. Doomed therefore to seek her fortune, she embarked as a governess, and her connexion among people of fashion, who knew her accomplishments, soon procured her a series of appointments, in which she had very successfully exerted her talents of all sorts: although she had never yet attained her main object, that of securing an establishment for life, by alluring some of the brothers or cousins of her various pupils into a matrimonial engagement.

By recommending and attaching to her a certain set of foreign professors, she had contrived to double her income out of the allowances with which they paid for her recommendation; and there had been whispers of too great an intimacy having subsisted between her and more than one of these "talented" Messieurs and Signori; but that might be mere scandal. Be it as it may, she was no sooner safely housed in Grosvenor Square than, to use a vulgar phrase, she "set her cap" at Mr. Fleming.

Her experience had taught her that few men are so susceptible of the tender assiduities and constant attention of a fine young woman, as those who are past a certain age. Their recollection of former feelings are still too much alive to have given place entirely to the coldness of age and apathy; gout

has not quite superseded the influence of the tender passion; and to find himself, when he has begun to feel his influence with the fair sex on the wane, an object of attraction to a fine dark-eyed girl, who "nothing loth," rather courts those worn-out gallantries, which others are beginning to spurn or to ridicule, is, it must be allowed, too flattering not to be felt. We are speaking of gentlemen about fifty; but of those who at that late period have not quite arrived at years of discretion.

Mr. Fleming was about this critical age, and being hale, hearty, and a widower, our governess, judging by former trials, was greatly in hopes that, with a little management, to be Mrs. Fleming the second was not quite out of the cards. She rallied therefore to her assistance all the little artillery of female blandishments, and carefully smoothing down all the asperities of her character into softness, commenced the siege in good earnest.

It was in vain, however, that Miss Wheeler directed all the artillery of her really fine eyes at Mr. Fleming. Their glances fell harmless, and were unperceived and unfelt. It was in vain that she lowered her voice into a languishing tone whenever she addressed him, or sighed when he would sometimes look towards her. Nobody could be more insensible of the blandishments of a woman than Mr. Fleming, whose whole heart and soul had only one object in view, and that was the gratification of his vanity by the aggrandizement of his family. It was this, and not any affection for her person, or admiration of her excellent qualities, that had induced his marriage with Miss Agnes Dornton; nor could the years which he passed in the society of one so admirable in all respects in any degree change the current of his feelings, or engender one sentiment unconnected with this grand object; no wonder then that Miss Wheeler's charms were powerless on a heart surrounded with such an adamant barrier of ambition. No wonder that such a man should be insensible to all the "delicate attentions" which Miss Wheeler studied to pay him, and which she sometimes carried so far as to attract the notice of the servants, and almost to rouse the suspicions of Lady Pomeroy, in spite of that lady's implicit confidence in, and blind admiration of, Miss Wheeler's superior qualities and fashionable manners; an admiration in which she was joined by Amelia; while Agnes, whose mind was more penetrating, and whose dis-

position was more inquisitive, and in whom a keen perception of the ridiculous was united with her other intense feelings, suspected the design of her governess, and amused herself and annoyed Miss Wheeler by a thousand instances of *espièglerie*, of which she was afraid to complain, and which she forebore to resent, from the fear of opening the eyes of the family to the designs of which she was so guiltily conscious.

In addition to this knowledge of her intentions, of which she strongly suspected Agnes, she also accused her in her own mind as the person who had once or twice exposed the mysteries of her toilet-table to the eyes of the servants, by ranging her rouge-pots and cosmetics in battle array on the chimney-piece of her dressing-room, with a tell-tale towel besmeared with paint, hanging out as a banner, to proclaim the origin of these roses on which she so much prided herself.

Smarting under these feelings, rendered deeper by the necessity for restraining and concealing them, Miss Wheeler heartily and bitterly hated Agnes; and many was the vow registered in the privacy of her own breast, of the severity with which she should be visited when the title of mother-in-law would make her mistress of the house, and give her power over the offender: as it was, her malice was shown in a thousand petty instances—in the difficulty of the tasks which she prescribed her—in misrepresentations with regard to her progress in her studies—and above all, in the praises which she took every opportunity of bestowing on Amelia. Judging from her own littleness of feeling, that nothing was more galling than the praises of a contemporary—she could not calculate upon such a mind as that of Agnes, which delighted in the praises she saw gave pleasure to her aunt and sister, even though they were so frequently made at her own expense.

It is thus that little minds seek to annoy, through the same means by which they feel they would themselves be annoyed: and they are quite at a loss to conceive how it happens, that arrows which they dip in malevolence, and point with all the bitter gall of their own spirit, should fall powerless before the superiority of hearts and minds which they cannot understand. It is astonishing how many miseries we create for ourselves by the indulgence of these little and unworthy feelings of our nature. They point out the sore places of our minds and

dispositions to those who wish to tease us, and we writhe under their effects, without creating either sympathy or condolence for that which we should not feel if we had never had the wish to inflict the same annoyances on others.

The perfect apathy of Mr. Fleming completely baffled all these attempts of Miss Wheeler: he remained as utterly insensible to all her languishments, and sighs, and glances, as though his heart had been made of cast iron: and the fair invader was beginning to despair of being any thing else than the governess in the family, when the arrival of Lady Pomeroy's son from Oxford gave a new turn to her ideas, and changed the object of her ambition.

The contrast between the staid Mr. Fleming's age of fifty-two or three, and young Pomeroy's youth of twenty-one, was not greater than that between their dispositions.

The one all coldness, ambition, and prudence; the other all fire, impetuosity, and impulse.

Fresh from college, with Ovid in his head, and romance in his heart, unused to the society of elegant women; but with ideas of the sex which were the result of his imagination more than his experience, he was just the person on whom the charms of Miss Wheeler were likely to make an impression.

Being the only male relation of Mr. Fleming, and the only son of his sister, he was destined to be the medium through which the ambitious schemes which they had jointly formed, were to be accomplished: for Mr. Fleming wished a branch of his own family to be ennobled, and he had therefore determined upon a marriage between young Pomeroy and Amelia, in the hope that the influence of the Dornton family, united to the power of his own wealth, would procure a baronetcy for him on his taking the name of Fleming.

Young Pomeroy was therefore the hopes of the family; and blessed with a fine person and great animal spirits, with a kind, generous, and feeling heart, he seemed every thing that Mr. Fleming and Lady Pomeroy could wish, excepting that he had not sufficient ambition for the one, or quite enough attention to etiquette and *bienséance* for the other.

Wild and ungovernable in his spirits, with a heart keenly alive to the admiration of the other sex, and with passions which, like touchwood, required but a spark to set them in a blaze, he was just the person upon whom Miss Wheeler might be supposed to use her "Love Mechanics" with effect.

The moment therefore of his arrival, and of her ascertaining that he was really twenty-one, and in consequence a free agent, she changed her operations; and quitting the uncle, attacked the nephew with all "Love's artillery."

The youth of Pomeroy, by giving her additional excitement, and perhaps by giving more reality to her attentions,—for when has not twenty-one this advantage over fifty-three?—gave a greater impetus to them, and rendered them more attractive; and poor Henry soon began to feel the effect of her dark lustrous eyes upon his heart, much in the same manner as the fleet of Marcellus felt the power of the burning glasses of Archimedes—by which, history says, that great philosopher scorched the Roman "hearts of oak" to cinders.

It was not, however, by these open attacks that his youthful heart was so much won, as by those stolen glances, withdrawn as soon as discovered—those sighs, which seemed to seek for utterance through useless resistance—that heaving bosom, that appeared to speak a "thousand soft inquietudes within;" and above all, the *sotto voce* lamentations over that destiny which rendered her dependent, and which made the control of her best and warmest feelings an imperative duty. This was the right chord to strike on, in a heart too apt to view the injustice of poverty with sympathy; and this feeling soon engendered in young Pomeroy the idea of remedying this injustice.

Miss Wheeler perceived the ground she was gaining on his inexperience; but the ordeal of Oxford had not been passed by Pomeroy without many ideas totally unconnected, though not quite incompatible with matrimony: of this Miss Wheeler's knowledge of mankind taught her to beware, and she felt the necessity of engaging his honour and generosity, or rather of entrapping them, as well as his love; if, indeed, the passion she had inspired deserved that name.

When the head of a woman and the heart of a man are both directed to the same object, and they live under the same roof, opportunities will not long be wanting to come to a right understanding; if that can be called a right understanding which generally sets every thing to wrongs.

Lady Pomeroy and Mr. Fleming were generally late in the breakfast-room: this gave the opportunity for a quarter of an hour's flirtation before they came down: this quarter of an hour gradually extended to a longer period. At first it

seemed to arise from accident—then from a tacit intention of both parties—and ultimately from a decided assignation. The drawing-room before dinner afforded a second legitimate opportunity for particular conversations; while numberless accidental meetings on staircases, in passages, in the picture-gallery, and in the library, gave them others, certainly shorter, but which Miss Wheeler knew well how to render interesting.

Still nothing definitive passed as to the nature of his sentiments; and Miss Wheeler knew too much to attempt to encourage a declaration of them, unless it could be accompanied with the offer of his hand; for it was with her as Othello thought it was with Desdemona, "hands, not hearts," although she studied to make him believe that he was gradually, against her own will, gaining ground in her affections. This was too gratifying to his youthful vanity not to be easily perceived; and the idea of her affections not only softened his heart, but raised the lady considerably in his estimation.

These frequent meetings, however, with the same thoughts in each other's heads, and feelings somewhat similar in each other's hearts, could not long continue without some resulting consequence. Flint and steel cannot come into collision without producing a flame; and so it happened with Miss Wheeler and Henry Pomeroy. The library was destined to be the scene of this eclaircissement—a poem of the impassioned Byron the immediate cause of ignition. With a throbbing pulse, and beating heart, and burning lips, Henry poured forth the effusions of a youthful passion, and with a blushing face, a downcast look, and convulsive sigh, she rested her head upon his bosom, and listened to his vows, and felt his kisses, as though they were the first vows that had ever met her ear—the first kisses that had fastened on her lips.

Still no word of marriage struck upon her anxious ear; and she lingered several moments in his arms, in the hope that the desirable sound would still finish one of the many broken sentences which Henry poured forth; but he had not yet entirely lost his senses.

Finding that she waited in vain, she started from him, bade him begone, threw herself on a sofa, and buried her face in her hands, calling herself an unhappy creature, degraded in her own eyes—abased in those of him she —— and here her voice seemed to falter, and became *entrecoupé*, as the French expressively call it; its accents became softer, and the re-

mainder of her lamentation was lost in the multitude of sobs which seemed to threaten a termination in that truly feminine disease, "hysterics."

Henry Pomeroy was overcome; he flew to the sofa; he threw his arms round her; pressed her to his bosom; whispered a thousand vows of constancy and of affection; and would perhaps have proceeded in his promise to the extent of Miss Wheeler's wishes, when his love and her arts were astonished into silence by the sudden apparition of the countenance of Agnes, peeping over the back of the sofa. How long she had been there, and whether she had been a witness of the whole scene, they could not tell: a smile played upon her intelligent countenance as she slid out of the room before her cousin could stop her; and before she had half ascended the stairs, they heard her give way to long and repeated bursts of laughter.

Nothing reduces the *alto* feelings of lovers so much as a discovery of this sort. All the romance of an interview is destroyed in a moment, and a certain feeling of silliness steals over the conscious minds of both parties, that has the effect of creating a kind of contempt for each other, and conveys to them something like that sensation which has been illustrated by the position of a dog's tail when stealing out of a room in disgrace.

The lady was the first to recover herself, and perceiving the only use which she could make of the circumstance, began to lament the false constructions which would be placed upon her conduct; the loss of character, which would be the consequence, together with all the dreadful results that must naturally follow to a poor dependant like herself. She then blamed his too ardent passion and persuasions, and her own too confiding and susceptible heart. She pleaded and upbraided by turns, till, urged by his passion, and really fearful of the too probable truth of many of her surmises, he soothed her with a direct proposition to remedy all by becoming her legal protector.

At the moment that he sealed this promise with his lips, and finding her no longer the resisting creature, she had been while her point was unattained, she sunk in his arms, and was in the act of pledging her vows in return for Henry's, when Lady Pomeroy burst into the library.

Indignation had quite driven all ideas of ceremony and *bienséance* out of her head, and she came on the offending

parties with all that vehemence of rage which generally characterises the anger of the vulgar, rather than the educated; but anger, real downright anger, is anger in all classes of the community, and shows itself pretty much in the same manner in Berkeley-Square as in Billingsgate. Miss Wheeler saw the coming storm, and not knowing what else to do, fainted *ex tempore*, by way of leaving the battle to Henry. His ideas, as well as all fear of his mother, were put to flight, however, the moment he saw his mistress apparently insensible, and he bent over her with intense anxiety, though he felt some surprise that no change whatever should take place in her complexion.

Agnes, who had followed her aunt into the room, immediately seized a bottle of eau de Cologne from one of the bronze stands on a pier table, and before Miss Wheeler was aware of her intention, so contrived to use it on her features, that Henry had not longer to wonder at her unchanged complexion.

Her fainting was immediately succeeded by hysterics, and Henry continued to soothe her, in spite of the angry denunciations of his mother, and of the grave and would-be-dignified looks of Mr. Fleming, who had been attracted by the unusual bustle in the library.

It is astonishing in what different lights different people view the same things. Thus, Lady Pomeroy called Miss Wheeler "artful hussy"—"perfidious minx"—"deceitful hypocrite;" while her son designated her under the more tender appellation of "injured innocence"—"calumniated excellence"—and "deserted orphan."

During this violent altercation between mother and son, Miss Wheeler kept up a kind of hysterical accompaniment, which filled up the hiatuses occasioned by Lady Pomeroy's indignation and Henry's tenderness; when her kerchief, having been partly removed to facilitate her breathing, becoming loose, a letter dropped from her bosom on the floor, which was immediately snatched up by Lady Pomeroy. Miss Wheeler was sensible of the circumstance, and starting at once into the full possession of her senses, she darted from Henry's arm towards Lady Pomeroy, to regain the letter and prevent its perusal. But she was too late. Forgetting all the usual attentions to ceremony, that lady was already in the midst of the letter, and consequently in possession of Miss Wheeler's secret, and of a knowledge of her imprudence.

She saw that concealment was at an end; that discovery and disgrace were inevitable; and what was before feigned, became real agitation. She covered her face, now really burning with blushes which crimsoned her forehead and her neck, with her handkerchief. Her sobs became convulsive, almost to suffocation: she screamed and stamped her foot upon the ground; and in the extremity of her now real agony of shame, would have done violence to herself, had she not been prevented by Henry.

In the mean time, astonishment seemed to have silenced Lady Pomeroy's indignation. She handed the letter to Mr. Fleming, upon whose apathetic countenance even a flush of indignation was seen to pass in its perusal. His mother, then resuming her usual demeanour, handed the epistle to Henry, desiring him to learn from that, the infamy of the object for whom he was ready to fly in the face of propriety—violate his filial duty—and overturn the well-matured projects of his respectable uncle. A faint "Oh—no! no—no!" was uttered by Miss Wheeler. But Henry's curiosity was painfully aroused by the complete change which the letter had so magically wrought upon his mother and uncle. He seized the paper, and with a pale countenance and trembling hand, read an epistle by which he learned, that had he persisted in marrying Miss Wheeler, his first child, at any rate, might certainly have had the honour of claiming the professor of Calisthenics as its father. The letter was from this worthy teacher of exercises, in reply to one in which she had stated and requested his advice in her critical situation; and he complied with her request, by urging the completion of her matrimonal schemes upon either the "superannuated uncle" or "the inexperienced nephew:" and concluded with pretty broad allusions to the facility with which the accomplishment of either of these projects might hide the fruits of their present, and tend to the concealment of future indiscretions.

Here was a downfal for poor Henry's vanity—here was a cruel catastrophe to his first romance—here was a tearing up root and branch of all his confidence in woman—of all his belief in her innocence, and her protestations in future.

How many of the best feelings of a youthful and manly breast have been thus annihilated and turned to their contraries, by the discovered schemes of a heartless and artful coquette!

This was a scene *bien vif* for the usually decorous and phlegmatic establishment of Mr. Fleming.

Henry rushed out of the library without a look at the "quondam mistress of his soul."—She upon whom within the last quarter of an hour he had gazed with passionate love, he could not now think upon without loathing. Within ten minutes he was in a chaise and four on his road to Oxford, forswearing all woman-kind, and thinking upon none of his classics, but the

Aspera et horrenda virgo

of Virgil, though even here the recollection of the Calisthenic professor rendered the allusion inapplicable. Perhaps, after all, his vanity was more mortified than his affection; and I much question, whether this is not the mortification most difficult to be forgiven.

Well—Henry went to Oxford and his classics; Miss Wheeler was driven in a hackney coach, number 942, to her professor of Calisthenics; Agnes made her maid dance a minuet to her *Te Deum* on the piano, in joy for their deliverance from the governess; Lady Pomeroy betook herself to Lady Betty Vincent, to tell how her recommendation had been disgraced; and to spread far and wide the defalcation from virtue of Miss Wheeler; and Mr. Fleming betook himself to the Court Guide.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FINISHING SCHOOL.

For to that seminary of fashion vain,
The rich and noble from all parts repair,
Where, grown enamour'd of the gaudy train,
And courteous 'haviour gent and debonnair,
They cast to imitate each semblance fair.
What dream they of—that with so little care
They risk their hopes—their dearest treasure there!

THERE is scarcely any body in the habit of reading those emporiums of intelligence—those propagators of rumour—those indiscriminate disseminators of truth and falsehood, in

which every thing necessary in life, from a wet-nurse to an undertaker, may be puffed and made known—the English newspapers—that has not observed, during the summer and Christmas vacations, the multitude of advertisements which relate to education.

To read these, one would suppose our country was peopled with sages; and that learning, philosophy, morals, and accomplishments, were every where to be as easily acquired as the silks and ribands and quack medicines, which figure away in the same columns with ladies' seminaries and classical academies.

Here, the whole store of classic learning, together with reading, writing, and arithmetic, fencing, dancing, and the use of the globes, is to be acquired by young gentlemen for annual stipendiary sums, from twenty-five guineas in Yorkshire to two hundred guineas near the metropolis: and there we find ornamental needlework, French, Italian, music, dancing, fancy-works, and all the rest of the feminine accomplishments, attainable at different "Establishments for young Ladies," for about the same prices.

And of what class of society in general do these schoolmasters and mistresses consist?—To whom is it that we intrust the sacred charge of forming the young minds of our children, and giving them that stamp which is to influence their passage through life? Why, principally, broken-down tradesmen, or professional men and their wives; who, having failed in their original calling in life, have no other means of support left than becoming coal-merchants, or wine-merchants, or schoolmasters and mistresses:—the three grand resources for all ruined people who wish to redeem their fortunes.

If a husband dies leaving a widow with an unprovided family, her friends immediately project a ladies' establishment: and with scarcely a knowledge of her own language, and that of the most moderate kind, she sets up for a teacher of all; and with the assistance of some French demirep, whose morals and conduct have driven her from her own country: or perhaps, as has been the case more than once, a French femme de chambre for a mistress of French; a French valet for a dancing-master; and with a profligate Italian refugee for a professor of music; sets up a school in which our English girls of a certain caste are to be fitted for wives and mothers. The poor children of every friend of the widow

and of all her friends' friends, are put in requisition, till a sufficient number is collected to furnish an income; and many a fortune is made by the savings from the board, by profits on books, and forfeited silver forks and spoons, and by the charges for educating these little urchins, who may be considered fortunate if they return home as empty headed as they came.

This is not at all a caricature description of the origin and formation of most of those establishments to which is intrusted the education, and consequently the happiness and virtue, of those to whom parents look for the comfort of their old age; as might easily be discovered, were the numerous professors of French, music, and dancing, who figure away at ladies' establishments and finishing schools in and near London, compelled to produce certificates of characters and occupations in their own country. Such schools as these are, however, only for the commonalty—for the second-rate citizen and tradesman—for the petit placemen, and all those of confined income. These are the only persons who are now taken in by the promises of these advertising dealers in education.

It was rather surprising amidst all the indignation expressed at the dereliction of Miss Wheeler, and among all the invectives with which her conduct was assailed by Lady Pomeroy and Mr. Fleming, that no thought occurred as to the very slight claims such a person possessed to be intrusted with the care of two young ladies of such tender ages, as those of Amelia and Agnes.

They never cast one reflection upon themselves, for having been so easily and so perfectly satisfied with the recommendation of a flighty woman of fashion, who was anxious to get rid of a troublesome protegée, for one of the most important offices of life; nor cast one atom of blame upon the precipitance with which the exhibition of a few showy and glittering accomplishments, had induced them to adopt a perfect stranger as the guide to the minds and morals of two children, to whom her examples and precepts might have formed the bane of their future lives.

Sickened as Mr. Fleming was of governesses by the attempt of Miss Wheeler to pollute the blood of his family, which he had striven so hard to render noble in future by his alliance with the Dorntons; at the very source of that stream which he was in hopes in time would flow into such a broad

channel of nobility, that its mercantile origin would be forgotten; he yet could not think of permitting his daughters to run the risk of contact with any other than the children of people in fashion, in a public establishment. He was also pretty well aware of the small claim that the generality have to teach, or even to superintend the teaching of, the accomplishments they profess.

But in this wide metropolis—this epitome of the world at large—this congregation of vice and virtue—this grand union of contraries of all descriptions—there are times, places, and people to meet all circumstances and situations.

Here are decayed people of fashion, or distant and collateral branches of gentility, as well as bankrupts of the middling orders of society, who undertake the care and cultivation of the female mind, or rather the regulation of their manners and persons; although they will never sully their establishment with any other than the scions of nobility.

Some of these undertake to bring out two or three young ladies who may be deprived of their parents; and contrive by the addition which this plan affords to their income, still to keep their place in society, and to make their houses still the resort of people of fashion.

Others, again, make a more open display of their pretensions to educate; and though they despise the drudgery of "teaching the young idea how to shoot," profess to finish young ladies of fashion in all the elegant accomplishments of the concert, the ball, and the drawing-room.

Of these, Mrs. Dashington had attained the greatest celebrity. A year or two's initiation was sure to give the stamp of fashion to any one who was fortunate enough to enjoy her protection. Her establishment was to young women, not educated at home, what the university is to young men; and the young ladies who had graduated in it, were considered at once fit for all the honours of presentation and the drawing-room.

By the help of her various professors, she had completely succeeded in giving her pupils that which the French call *tournure*—that air *distingué* which pleases and impresses the mind, without our knowing why, and which frequently bears the palm of admiration away from beauty itself.

The first thing, according to Mrs. Dashington's system of education, was "manner"—the second thing was "manner."

and the third thing was "manner:" thus every thing was sacrificed to its attainment.

The whole of her ethics consisted in doing every thing like a woman of fashion: her pupils sang and danced with the most exquisite taste and judgment—but they sang and danced like ladies, and not like professors. In short, it was a universal observation, that a young lady who had enjoyed the advantages of Mrs. Dashington's establishment, was never known to utter a sound of discord—in her music—or commit a *faux pas*—in a minuet or a quadrille.

As to principles and temper, they were beneath the consideration of an aristocratic school-mistress; and as the end of her education was merely to procure husbands for her pupils, why, if their principles and tempers held out till they were married, the end was accomplished; and it was the husband's business to preserve and keep—or endure them afterwards.

This was the very person to suit Mr. Fleming's and Lady Pomeroy's notions of female education; and interest was immediately made for the admission of Amelia and Agnes to her house in —— Square.

Mrs. Dashington, from her intimate knowledge of the peerage, was perfectly aware of the Miss Flemings' claims to family connexion by the mother's side; and her respect for the immense wealth of Mr. Fleming was some palliation in her eyes for the want of it on his. The arrangements therefore were soon completed; and the young ladies accompanied Lady Pomeroy to be introduced to their new protectress, from whom they were to derive those finishing touches, which the master-artists give to their pictures before they send them to the exhibition.

Our heroines were presented in due form to six or eight young ladies, who were at that time the inmates of Mrs. Dashington's fashionable establishment; among these, there was but one who had any pretensions to travel out of the usual characteristics of common-place boarding-school girls; and this was Lady Emily Trevor, who, to much sweetness of disposition, and a feeling heart, united a portion of talent, and what was still more rare, a degree of prudence, which is seldom the accompaniment of youth, genius, and beauty.

The rest were such common-place characters as one meets with in every boarding school or family. All their ideas cen-

tred in a certain routine of lessons; all their ambition extending only to shine at those parties of Mrs. Dashington, at which they were permitted to be present; parties wherein they first contrive to exert their incipient coquetry, and from which, alas! too many of them learned lessons not to be unlearned by their future career.

And here, by the by, a word or two on the propriety and regulation of establishments of this kind. They are, of course, generally kept by needy persons; and those persons are but too apt to lie under pecuniary and other obligations, which they are willing enough to return by invitations to all the little *fêtes* which the nature of their occupation enables them, and, in some instances requires, them to give.

By these means, young women are brought in contact with persons of the other sex, whom they never could have met at the houses of their parents; and while the youthful mind is too fresh in life, and too unhacknied in the conventional distinctions of society, to place a proper value upon rank and equality of worldly circumstances, they are but too open to the impression which a pleasing exterior and address, and agreeable conversation, intermixed with a little flattery, is too likely to be made by the first man who has ever talked to her as though she were, and has made her feel that she *was*, a woman.

There are, in consequence, few of these establishments in which there is not a great danger of a young woman's forming connexions which can never be pleasing to their more ambitious parents; for while there are idle and briefless barristers, with wit enough to make themselves agreeable—young officers, with sufficient dash and gallantry to captivate the female heart—and wealthy dandy sons of merchants, with power to command opera boxes for the duenna of the establishment—there will always be a crowd of young men who will flock to a "flirtation general," with young ladies of a rank in life whom they could never meet with by any other means than their acquaintance with the school-mistress. This fault, and a most dangerous one it is, exists in all the gradations of these establishments; and, in many cases, the foundation of those unequal alliances, which embitter so many parents' hearts, and disappoint so many expectations, have had their origin in these schools of embryo coquetry—in these scenes of incipient flirtation.

Those who imagine the room appropriated to study in

Mrs. Dashington's establishment to resemble any thing like a common school, would be most egregiously mistaken.

There was no long desk at which the pupils were confined to pursue their studies; no torturing stocks, to twist their toes into north by north-east, and south by south-west; no back boards of bright red morocco, with a steel collar to be passed under their chin, to keep their heads up. No: the young ladies of Mrs. Dashington's establishment could hold up their heads high enough without any such mechanical assistance; they had only to think upon their birth—upon their ancestors—upon their aunt the marchioness—their cousin the countess—or their fortune; and crown the whole by the exclusive reputation of being a pupil of the ——— Square school, to enable them to hold up their heads quite high enough for any purpose in the world.

Indeed, long after they had quitted it, and were "out," as the phrase is, and very well applied in some instances, they were very apt to think very little of all the new presentations, who had not taken their degrees as "Mistresses of Arts" in Mrs. Dashington's university; and some of her very exclusive *élèves* were once on the point of establishing an annual quadrille of her ex-pupils, after the manner of the dinner of some of our public schools, and admit none but Christ-church men as their visiters, only that the husbands of some of them having had the misfortune to have been matriculated at Magdalen Hall, Wadham, and St. John's, did not like to leave their wives at the mercy of the gentlemen commoners of Christ-church.

In the stead of all the above-enumerated common appendages of a boarding-school, Mrs. Dashington's pupils' room exhibited elegant library tables, covered with all the lighter literary productions of the day, mixed up with a thousand knick-knacks in or-molu, china, bronze, paper and pasteboard.

The principal portion of the literature of the establishment consisted in the novels of the day, the poems of Byron and Moore, and the various effusions of the "Flowers of Poesy," and all the host of little "prettynesses," which daily emanate from the ever-teeming press of modern publications, in magazines, annuals, repertories, &c.

These the young ladies were allowed to read indiscriminately; nor, as long as they paid sufficient attention to the professors of music and dancing—as long as they moved to

admiration in a minuet, or swept the strings of their harp, or touched the keys of their piano with elegance— did Mrs. Dashington trouble herself much about the regulation of their minds

Manners were her profession, and morals were out of the question ; thus inactive minds had leisure and opportunity to give way to their indolent propensities ; while those of a more active tendency might, perhaps, with greater danger, indulge in the indiscriminate perusal of all the flimsy, and often pernicious books which lay upon Mrs. Dashington's tables.

The flimsy parts of these productions, Agnes had strength of mind and intellectual superiority enough to despise ; but where there was passion and feeling, the gush of genius, and the genuine warmth of poetry—where there was the true or the overwrought history of hearts and their propensities—her own heart was too apt to mislead her judgment, and, in spite of her own right tendencies, she laid up a store of hypotheses which, on a mind differently constituted, might have engendered principles and a *code morale* of a very dangerous nature. There was, however, implanted in her breast such an innate sense of right, that this reading only made her find apologies for the failings of others, without exciting a temptation in a heart so pure as her own ; and conscious of this correct feeling, she would often violently assert her independence, by defending the guilty as well as the injured, against the vituperations and calumnies of public report.

These points of her character, however, the firm friendship which she had contracted with the Lady Emily Trevor in some measure counteracted.

Lady Emily united prudence with feeling ; and with a judgment more mature than her years, she attempted, and in some measure succeeded, in a regulation of her friend's more ardent temperament.

Lady Emily was the sister of Charles Trevor who had danced with Agnes on an evening which still remained most vividly impressed upon her remembrance ; and her features bearing a slight resemblance to her brother's, recalled all the recollections of that evening, with their subsequent childish meetings on the seashore, with sensations a little more allied to the feelings of the woman, than they were when those half-stolen interviews were enjoyed at Brighton.

Lady Emily, too, wished nothing more than to make a sister of her friend, and lost no opportunity of speaking well

of Charles, whom she loved with all the fondness of a sister's love; and who that has ever had a sister, does not know how strong that love is, and how often a sisterly affection renders a woman blind to a brother's failings?

This circumstance begot a confidence between these two young ladies, which led to a close intimacy. Agnes loved the Lady Emily for her kindness, her goodness of disposition, and perhaps for her likeness to her brother; but she thought her friend's mind a little too common-place—a little too much given to tread in the beaten track which others had trod before, and too apt to regulate her feelings by her head, instead of permitting her actions and emotions to be dictated entirely by her heart.

Lady Emily loved Agnes for the generosity of her disposition. She loved her even for her romance, though she saw its dangerous tendency; and she admired the vigour of her intellect, and the richness of her imagination. But she did the utmost in her power to curb those ebullitions of her feelings, which were ever bursting out into violent emotions of indignation at oppression, or of unqualified admiration at efforts of intellect or generosity.

She saw all the sterling good qualities of her heart, the almost stern uprightness of her mind, in spite of all the softness engendered by her course of reading, and in spite of all the excuses which her generous kindness could find for the dereliction of others.

She felt that such a woman would make an invaluable wife for her darling brother, and trusted that such qualities would fix for ever the wavering mind of Charles Trevor. Agnes' own recollection of her former intercourse, her romantic ideas of first love, and early impressions, rendered her secretly almost as anxious for this event as her friend; and the image of Trevor, thus kept alive in her mind, no wonder that, when time and chance threw him in her way, her heart was just in the state to deceive itself, and to receive the impression which the ardent impetuosity of a young man's passion was calculated to inspire.

During this period Trevor was abroad; and though he was not a very constant correspondent, yet, as the few letters that Lady Emily received from him gave lively descriptions of the places he had passed through, and were plentifully chequered with "blue skies of Italy," the "banks of the Arno," and the "sublime of the Alps and Apennines," they

impressed them both with the idea that he was a man of taste and feeling; and those descriptions were well calculated to keep alive the romance which had been already woven in the imagination of Agnes.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FAUX PAS.

I want a hero: an uncommon want,
When every year and month sends forth a new one,
Till, after cloying the Gazette with cant,
The age discovers he is not the true one;
Of such as these I should not care to vaunt,
I'll therefore take our ancient friend, Don Juan.

BYRON

By this time we little doubt but many of our readers are wondering where the hero of the tale is concealed, and are turning over every chapter in "double quick time," as the military say, hoping to find out the ROUÉ. It is, however, the province of the skilful dramatist to keep back its principal character till the second, and sometimes the third act; nay, in some instances, we have known him introduced only just in time for the denouement, and indeed that is the principal part of the work, whether novel or play, in which he is necessary.

The subordinate characters may keep up, prolong, and perhaps attenuate the interest, which the hero arrives in time to complete. Besides, there is, perhaps, some art in thus keeping back the character whose life we profess to write.—Mystery, we all know, excites an interest, which its removal frequently destroys. The interest of Mokanna is kept alive only so long as his veil is unlifted: the revelation of his countenance makes him a common hero; and a common hero, at least a modern hero, is a mere nobody—a mere coat and breeches part, as it is phrased in the technicals of the green-room. There is likewise a difficulty in our hero which is uncommon—the difficulty of creating a Roué bad enough to make him

interesting, without rendering him so bad as to frustrate such an intention: though this difficulty is in the present instance somewhat obviated by our hero's having made himself to our hands; and we send the personage to the world just as nature, education, and habit have formed him. Perhaps we ought not to enumerate nature as having any hand in the formation of his character.

Our only duty is to give him a fair chance in his debut. Denied the flourish of trumpets which precedes and gives dignity to the entrance of a dramatic hero; or the privilege of making him sing a song behind the scenes, to create a favourable impression in favour of his voice and music in the audience; the novelist is reduced to the necessity of a mere verbal description.

Had he been a veritable Don Juan, we might have given him the advantage of a trap-door, and a handful of flames. But as he is neither more nor less than one of those wild spirits who are to be found every where spending a princely fortune, and mispending time, with considerable talents in the pursuit of any pleasure that presents itself, travelling out of the beaten track in quest of new sensations, and rushing into every thing that gave

Hope of a pleasure, or peril of a grave:

why we must content ourselves with the introduction which one of his own mad acts gave him to the notice of society. An act which was conveyed to the public through the following mysterious paragraphs in the morning and evening papers,—paragraphs which about this period excited a great deal of surprise and scandal in the fashionable world; and a great deal of speculation in that portion of the world which could not claim this enviable distinction:—

PARAGRAPH I.

"The circles of haut-ton are much occupied just now with a discovery which implicates a young and lovely countess with a certain notorious, dashing, and elegant baronet."

PARAGRAPH II.

"The parties alluded to in our columns of yesterday, are supposed to be the young and lovely Countess of M—— and

Sir R—— L——e. The lady was married only three years since to her present lord, who is the head of one of the most ancient families in the kingdom. The gallant Baronet has distinguished himself as much in the field of Mars as in the bowers of Venus; and it is whispered that this is the third time that he has given some hopes of a profitable cause to the gentlemen of the long-robe."

PARAGRAPH III.

"*Faux-pas in fashionable life.*

"The names of the frail fair one and of her gallant paramour are in every body's mouth in certain circles; but until the publicity of the law shall make them known, our readers must pardon us for a concealment which delicacy renders necessary. It is said that the estrangement of the lady from her husband for the last few months had given rise to the jealousy, whose vigilance was at length rewarded; if a husband can call it reward, with the full conviction that it was well founded. The lady, conscious of this, contrived to escape through the garden of the family-mansion in ——— Square, where she was met by the gallant Baronet and a faithful friend, and conveyed to a place of concealment and security. There are various opinions afloat upon this interesting topic in the fashionable world. Some blame the nobleman for marrying a lady so much younger than himself. Others think he paved the way to his own dishonour by the admission of such a fascinating and notorious gallant to such close and continued intimacy. As to the frail heroine of the adventure, she is blamed, and pitied, according to the feelings and characters of those engaged in the disquisition."

PARAGRAPH IV.

"*Further particulars.*

"Many of the circumstances connected with the late *faux-pas* are of such a nature, as to throw a particular interest over the whole affair. The youth and beauty of the guilty pair—the violence of their passion—the contrivance of their stolen pleasures—their hair-breadth escapes—their moon-light interviews—together with the sworn gallantry and acknow-

ledged bravery of the gay Lothario, have given to the whole adventure a tincture of romance, which has rendered it the most interesting occurrence of the kind that has happened for half a century.

"It is said, that certain gentlemen of the long-robe are already retained; that Mr. B—— has, in conversation, expressed some portion of the bitter sarcasm for which he is famed, and with which he hopes to induce the jury to mitigate the damages: while Mr. C. P—— is dressing up a most affecting account of the domestic felicity which has been violated by the spoiler, and of the virtue that has become the prey of the destroyer."

These were the paragraphs that drew every female eye to that corner of the paper set apart for intelligences of this nature; and greedily were they read and commented upon by the young ladies of Mrs. Dashington's establishment: who felt a peculiar interest in all they understood of the affair, from the circumstance of the "fallen fair one" having been a pupil of their "University;" and one of those whose rank and influence were the pride and glory of Mrs. Dashington.

That lady lifted up her hands and eyes with astonishment at this lapse of prudence, as she called it, in a pupil of hers; and wondered that only a three years' intercourse with the world should have produced such a change in her mind and morals, as to have occasioned such a dereliction from duty and propriety—as to be found out. A few days afterwards, the following *historiette* gave additional interest to the affair:—

PARAGRAPH V.

"*Duel in high life.*

"A meeting took place yesterday morning, in the neighbourhood of Hounslow, between Sir R—— L——e, the hero of the late *crim. con.* affair, and the gallant and honourable Colonel F——, the brother of the Lady: the former was attended by the Honourable F—— V——, and the gallant Colonel by a brother officer. The parties arrived on the ground about seven in the morning in two hired chaises, which were stationed in a by-lane leading to Cranford; it being an affair in which the interference of seconds could be of no avail, none was attempted. The Colonel saluted his

antagonist when they met, with that *froide politesse* which distinguishes the salutation of a determined enemy: the gay Lothario returned it with a bow and a smile, and with a look of nonchalance and bravery, that would have graced a better cause. The ground was measured—and the pistols loaded by the seconds in solemn silence. Each second then brought his principal to his station: when Sir R—— L—— observing that his antagonist was placed in a direct line between himself and an oak tree, by which he was made a much more conspicuous mark, immediately pointed out the circumstance to the Colonel's second, who perceiving his error, and the advantage it gave the Baronet, immediately made a different arrangement, expressing his thanks for the hint.

"At the signal given for firing, the gallant Colonel's pistol was discharged to the instant; and so well had it been directed, that the ball passed through the tie of his adversary's neckcloth, who, to the surprise of all parties, had not even raised his pistol from his side.

"Turning immediately to his second, Sir R—— L—— desired him to ascertain if the Colonel was satisfied. Being answered in the negative, and requested to take his fire, the Baronet himself again put the question; and on again receiving a negative, he deliberately turned round, and firing in an opposite direction at a tree nearly three times the distance from him that the Colonel was, lodged his ball directly in the centre of the trunk: then resuming his position, he signified to his friend that he was ready to take the second shot, as, by his not firing in the air, no termination had been put to the contest. The seconds here declared it impossible to proceed under such circumstances, and that the Colonel had done sufficient to satisfy his honour—in which he was compelled reluctantly to agree; and the parties returned to town.

"We understand that the moment the affair was settled, the gallant Baronet took off his neckcloth, and showed his friend and the surgeon, who had attended near the ground, that the ball had actually grazed his throat, and that his shirt-collar was nearly saturated with blood."

This account was given as an authorized history of the affair in all the morning papers; and it was astonishing how the gallant bearing and generosity, as it was termed, of Sir R—— L——, turned the tide of public conversation and opinion in favour of the seducer.

Bravery and generosity are qualities which make more way

with women, than perseverance and virtue; or even than what is called honour, where it is not emblazoned with these accompaniments. His conduct on this occasion, conferred on the hero of the adventure a character that gave him a dangerous interest in the eyes of the young and inexperienced; and his fault was forgotten in the minds of many, in the contemplation of the romantic manner in which it had been perpetrated, and the dashing and daring gallantry with which its consequences had been braved.

A few, but those were not among the young, the thoughtless, and the gay, looked upon the nonchalance with which he had conducted himself in the field, only as an aggravation of his error; and considered him as standing there ready to rush into the presence of his Maker, in the very act of defending the violation of one of his most sacred commandments.

As usual, upon such occasions, in this very just world of ours, the lips of censure were much more opened against the offending female than against her seducer. By her own sex in particular, she was treated most unsparingly: nothing was remembered of her but her frailty; and they all vituperated her dereliction from virtue, without mentioning one alleviating circumstance in her favour. In recapitulating her crime, they forgot that its foundation was laid in the sacrifice which had been made of her youth and beauty at the shrine of interest and ambition: they forgot that her husband was three times her age, and, if the world spoke truth, with vices equal to his years; and they found no apology for her, in the remembrance that her seducer was a practised corrupter of the sex: —devoting the whole powers of a well-educated mind, a peculiarly graceful person, and a well-earned character for bravery, to that pursuit which had attained for him the title of *l'homme a bonnes fortunes*, which being translated, means simply, "a successful scoundrel." But the French have very pretty terms and phrases for all sorts of crimes.

There had, however, been some circumstances connected with this *bonne fortune* of our hero's, which rendered it rather a more flagrant breach of trust, and a greater violation of hospitality and of friendship, than ever our latitudinarian world of fashion could patronise; and for a wonder, thoughts were really entertained of excluding the gentleman as well as the lady from society, at least for a time. This idea was much patronised by the many of his own sex, who envied him for the

superiority of his mind and person, and for the sway which he had long held in the high circles in which he moved; for he had long been the "glass of fashion in which every one dressed himself;" and long given laws to the forms of hats, the cut of pantaloons, and the ties of cravats; a distinction which, to do him justice, he only enjoyed as it enabled him to make fools of the many, while, with his select few, he laughed at their folly. Well would it have been for some of his coterie, had these been the only things in which they had imitated him. Circumstances, however, soon rendered the adoption of this measure of exclusion unnecessary, as he withdrew himself to the continent, till the affair should be blown over; an event which was announced in the Kentish Chronicle, dated Dover: and, till his reappearance upon the tapis of our history, where he is not at present necessary, we must be contented with these slight notices of the movements of our intended hero; for such is Sir R—— L——.

PARAGRAPH VI.

"On Thursday morning last, the gallant Baronet, who has lately made himself so conspicuous in the *beau-monde*, by his elopement with a certain celebrated Countess, arrived here in company with his frail companion, and the friend who was his second in the field. A private packet was immediately hired, in which the whole party set sail for the continent, where it is rumoured that they intend to travel for some few months, until the legal and other processes consequent on the elopement are arranged."

This was the last paragraph upon an affair which proved one of the nine days' wonders of the fashionable world at that period.

But it was rather a curious sight to see the eight or ten young ladies of Mrs. Dashington's establishment eagerly waiting for the morning papers, and still more eagerly prying into them for all the information which was to be obtained upon this subject. It was curious too, to hear their disquisitions and opinions upon these paragraphs; and it would have been still more so to have known all their thoughts, and wishes, and feelings, to which their perusal and contemplation of this adventure had given rise.

Such details of such a circumstance were curious subjects for the study and contemplation of young and inexperienced

female minds, just entering into life; and yet we are compelled to admit, that the newspapers which contained them were much more sought after, and reap in the "finishing school," for the first four days after this affair, than any of the books which usually occupied their reading hours.

Amelia read it as a matter of course; she uttered the word "Shocking," cast up her eyes, and there was an end of the matter.

Agnes, one year younger in years, but five years older than her sister in feeling, read the accounts, and listened to all the observations to which they had given rise, with a mixed feeling of pity and horror, which she could not however entirely divest of something like admiration at the intrepidity of the hero of the tale; in which a youthful mind is too apt to find excuses for derelictions of this nature.

What a pity is it that the commencement and accomplishment of these offences are the only portions of them that meet the public eye; while the subsequent remorse, the soul-subduing years of solitary shame, the desertion of the man for whose evanescent love

> they have lost
> State, station, heaven, mankind's—their OWN esteem,

are all concealed, or known only to some pitying friend, who still by stealth will kindly comfort the fallen fair one with a tear of pity; or to some menial, whose wages keep down her insolence, and purchase her unwilling attention, till death delivers the victim from the scorn of an unpitying world!

The result of these *liaisons* divested of their romance—the hours of solitude and shame—the tears of bitter repentance as they see the former companions of their youth and innocence rolling along in the full enjoyment of that "caste" of society, out of whose pale one unfortunate dereliction from the path of rectitude has thrown them—ought always to accompany the newspaper histories of these affairs. It would be a charitable and an awful lesson, to the young, romantic, and impassioned, were somebody to collect the subsequent lives of all the *divorcées* who figure away for a moment or two in the newspaper annals of gallantry. Perhaps, though the perfect annihilation of their names from all acknowledged recollection, except in some few cases, where guilt has "burned brighter than their shame," and enabled them to

stem the torrent, or to bear it with unblushing effrontery, ought to be a lesson awful enough in its consequences, as it must prove

> that all is o'er
> For them on earth, except some years to hide
> Their shame and sorrow deep in their hearts' core

CHAPTER XV.

THE PRESENTATION.

> For weeks within the shop they say,
> The maidens turned the night to day;
> Assistants and *elêves* were tired,
> And countless 'prentices expired:
> Needle in hand, 'tis said, they died on,
> Till every dress was shaped and tried on—
> Till flounce and flower had found their station,
> And every gown its destination.
>
> B——E F——M.

For some two or three years the sisters continued at Mrs. Dashington's school, both becoming still more confirmed in all those habits of mind which had characterized their infancy—the one conforming to all the ceremonies of her education, and thus becoming gradually a creature of mere form; the other, drinking with avidity from all the streams of literature and poetry, which the miscellaneous and itinerate library of Mrs. Dashington's drawing-room provided, and by these means feeding rather than restraining and regulating the high and independent passions of her nature; but with all these warm and impetuous feelings of the heart were mingled a nobleness of spirit, and a generosity of mind, which rendered her admired and beloved by every body. Her heart was perpetually in her hand, and on her lips; what the one dictated, was the impulse to the actions and words of the other. Her allowance was entirely expended in indiscriminate charity, so that her wardrobe suffered dreadfully

from this use—or misuse, as Mrs. Dashington called it, of her ample means. In short, all her actions were the result of impulse: the sight of misery was enough to draw a tear from her eye, and relief from her purse. She stopped not to inquire if the misery was real; it was apparent, and that was sufficient.

She drew all her knowledge of life from poetry, and creating an existence of her own, believed it to be the one through which she was to pass; but in spite of all this strong feeling, in spite of all her indiscriminate reading, there was a steady perseverance in right in every thing she did; and though she often acted without judgment, it was never without principle. But here was a being to be turned upon the great theatre of life. Here was a heart to go out among the heartless; and here were feelings and affections to become perhaps the prey of the male coquette, to be blighted by ingratitude, and to be chilled by the deceit which one meets with at every turning in the crooked paths of our existence.

Into this world, however, it was now decreed that she was to enter: due notices were given to Mrs. Dashington of the departures of the Misses Flemings; and Lady Emily Trevor was to quit at the same time.

As nothing could be done without a presentation at court, at least in Lady Pomeroy's ideas, this was the first thing thought of; and to her entire satisfaction, notices were just now issued from the chamberlain's office, of an approaching drawing-room.

Her first presentation is an epoch of great importance in the life of a young lady. It gives her the first privilege of a woman, that of entering into dissipation. It is the signal that she is "out," and therefore ranked among those who are, for the future, open to receive cards for balls, and proposals of marriage. A first drawing-room is looked back to by many through a long life of gayety and splendour, with keen sensations of regret and delight; and many an old dowager have we heard describe her hoop, and her festoons, and her feathers; and the gracious reception she met with in the circle of Queen Charlotte and George the Third, while she casts up her eyes, and shrugs her shoulders, at the change of costume, and at the admission of many who now parade before the King; but who, she avers, with a significant toss of the head, would never have been received at court in the good old days of Queen Charlotte. But this

laxity of morals the ladies of the old school attribute to the abolition of hoops. The buckram of propriety they aver to have been put off with these impregnable whalebone defences; and then they cast their glance towards a portrait of themselves decked out in all their courtly appendages, or upon the window-curtains, three of which had been made out of the damask of one petticoat of the ancient *régime;* and sigh as they exclaim with all the old people that ever lived, whether they speak of decorum of conduct or of dress —"Ah! it was not so in my younger days."

A drawing-room had, of late years, been scarce; it was no surprise that the present one had been waited for with impatience, and looked forward to with anxiety.

For some weeks all the milliners and dress-makers from Conduit-street to South Audley-street had been in full occupation. The needle of the poor dear little seamstresses, who slave away their youth and beauty in these nunneries of needlework, had been plied early and late, with no other reward than the contemplation of the finery which was growing into shape under their ingenious fingers; and strange to say, this contemplation is a great delight to every female mind, even though she who contemplates is never destined to wear or to enjoy it: and hence the pleasures of shopping with one richer than ourselves: there is a kind of magic to the female heart in the touch of silks, and satins, and sarsnets, in the handling of lace, leno, and embroidery, which it is difficult for the other sex to conceive; excepting those unfortunates who have to pay the bills, which are the scarcely ever-failing sequence of such a temptation, when the fair one has any kind husband with credit enough attached to his name to place on the debtor side of a ledger in any of these emporiums of woman's vanity and ruin.

It used to be said of a certain very beautiful professor of the admirable arts of millinery and mantua-making, that she had been the cause of more matrimonial fracas than had ever occurred through the difference of tempers, irreconcileable dispositions, infidelity and jealousy, or the "thousand-and-one" causes that render the married life, in general, any thing but the Elysium which bachelor poets would make it. Her beauty was of that sort which made any thing become her, or rather she became every thing.

Every day, therefore, her varied genius in the composition of caps and bonnets was exerted to produce something new.

which she wore herself; and as every day is a levee-day at the shrines of folly and vanity, many were those who attributed the beauty of Mrs. B—— to the cap; and ordered it, under the supposition that it would confer the same charms on herself, which she had envied and admired in the *marchande des modes.*

"What a sweet cap!—what a charming bonnet! Oh the celestial *fichu!*—the heavenly trimming!—the enchanting flounce! Was ever such an angelic taste! Look, my love,"—to some new-made husband, who had still enough of his love left to attend his bride to her milliners—"Is it not beautiful?"

"Pray allow me to try it on, Ma'am. Really, it does become your Ladyship prodigiously; it is exactly the thing—Is it not, Sir? (or my Lord, or Sir Thomas, or whatever the poor man's title might be)—I declare I had just the style of your Ladyship's face in my mind when I composed that hat."

"No—had you though? Dear, how strange! Is'nt it, love? Well, I really think I do look vastly well in it—don't you, my dear?"—Perhaps an approving smile, or a plain affirmative, might have immediately followed this appeal; but unfortunately, the same had been made for the last fortnight on a hundred of the same occasions.

"Well, it is certainly a sweet thing"—with a gentle sigh, and putting it down.

"Yes, it certainly is; and I have no doubt but that my Lady Dashly will seize upon it the instant she sees it:"—a sigh and a look from the wife, as her glance lingers over the beautiful bonnet—"or else Sir Charles Dashly, who comes here every day, will order it home for his Lady himself—to surprise her, in her dressing-room: a thing he frequently does," continued the astute milliner.

"Do you hear that, my love?" gently murmurs the Lady in her husband's ear.

"Though I am sure," continues the professor of vanity, "it is not at all in her style; and exactly suits your Ladyship, as I mentioned to his Lordship just now."

What man can resist two pretty women?—the one whom he hopes to keep in good temper at home; while the other, perhaps her beauty, tempts to the hopes of propitiating abroad. The cap, bonnet, or dress, is sent to Grosvenor, Berkeley, Cavendish, or Portman Squares; and a tall dandy, with a starched collar, curled pate, and Brobdignag shirt-pin, mount-

ed at a high desk, places an account of the articles before a certain quantity of pounds, shillings, and pence, in a voluminous ledger; which shows the lady's accuracy, to swell that bill, which is destined at the ensuing "merry Christmas" to occasion heart-burnings, distrust, and dislike, between two people who are linked together for the purpose of making each other happy.

How much domestic felicity is marred—how many years of happiness sacrificed—and how much respectability immolated at this shrine of female vanity!

We really believe, if a correct censorship were instituted as to all the causes of disagreement, separation, and divorce, that the greatest number of these would be traced to the account—and accounts of milliners and mantua-makers.

There is scarcely a flounce that is not pregnant with the fire of discord—a cap or hat that does not set somebody together by the ears—a trimming purchased abroad that does not produce one at home, or a dress that does not induce a domestic squabble. But it is no matter—it was, and is, and ever will be the same. What was Eve's shame is her daughter's pride—though when, by the leaf of her husband, she first adopted her simple costume, she little dreamt of all the ramifications of pelisses, negligées, hoops, flounces, and furbelows, into which that costume has been amplified by the characteristics of modern female habiliments.

Well, to resume, the poor little seamstresses plied their needles—the plumassiers dressed up their feathers with all the pride of peacocks—mammas, governesses, chaperons, young ladies, and ladies'-maids, were in a bustle from morning till night: the milliners' doors were besieged; every body thought to be first served, and every body thought themselves neglected.

It would be an endless task to describe the agonies which a crooked flounce, or an ill-adjusted gusset—a too narrow skirt, or too stiff a train—produced; and then the dread that the dress might be sent home too late, and not allow sufficient time to put it on with effect, kept many a bright eye sleepless till the morning dawned.

At length, however, the eve of the important day arrived; and whatever might be the lot of others, the two Misses Flemings' dresses were brought home in the carriage before they made their dinner-toilet the previous day.

Lady Pomeroy's orders had been liberal ; and the rich Mr. Fleming's pay being sure and speedy, and their bills unquestioned, the dress-makers were apt to leave some of nobler rank, whose pay was not quite so certain, to take their chance, or to go home at the last moment, rather than disappoint the Fleming family.

The instant the carriage was announced, a council was assembled—or rather a committee of examination on the effect of what the previous council had determined. The mantua-makers' productions were displayed in Lady Pomeroy's dressing-room. The dressmaker, and the maids of the young ladies, did the best to display their works to advantage ; and Lady Pomeroy and her nieces were perfectly satisfied.

As to Agnes, she was delighted ; she examined every trimming, shook the train into a hundred different folds, descanted on the pearls, wished to begin to dress immediately, and was quite impatient, because Carbury had not sent the feathers. In short, as Lady Pomeroy said, she was quite plebeian in her pleasure. Even Amelia, however, expressed some delight at the elegance and splendour of the dresses ; and talked with more animation on laces, flounces, and trimmings, than she had ever been known to exercise on any other subject.

It certainly is the right chord to strike : for what female heart does not vibrate to any sound in which this subject, so paramount, is involved ?

Their own dresses, together with female wonderment as to those of their acquaintance, furnished them with food for conversation during dinner and the evening, when they retired early, that they might commence the operation of dressing betimes in the morning.

It would be a safe bet on the dreams of this night, to lay a hundred to one that there was not one female fancy that did not revel through the night in dreams of diamond stomachers —festoons of pearls, hooped up with emeralds—sleeves fastened to the shoulder with buckles of amethyst—royal salutes, and the long train of other attendants on a presentation.

At length the morning arrives ; and ladies'-maids, for the first time in their lives, are up with the larks—every thing is in readiness at the toilet-tables—the cheval glasses are so disposed that the best view of effect may be obtained—every article from the garter to the gloves—from the white satin slipper from Taylor's, to the gorgeous tiara and plumes which

the united powers of Gray and Carbury have composed, is distributed where it can be called into action the moment its service is required—a cup of coffee is hastily swallowed, and the important operation commences.

Now comes the trial of temper of maids and mistresses—the stupidity of the one, the fastidiousness of the other, with all the gradations of anger from the peevish Pshaw, excited by a pin put in the wrong way—to the exclamation of ire produced by the breaking of a lace pulled too tightly, or an ornament becoming untacked—an exclamation, alas! which sometimes partakes of the character, though not of the form, of an oath, from the lips of many a pretty dressee.

Many a gentleman would, I believe, entertain a very different opinion of the temper of the fair partner whom he sees all smiles at a quadrille, could he have beheld her preparing for her party. But the toilet is certainly a sad trial of temper, even to the most philosophical and the best-tempered; and when its importance is considered, it is scarcely to be wondered at:—for what would half the sex be without it?

And then ladies'-maids are so stupid, and the pins of the present day so inferior, and mantua-makers so tiresome, and glasses so disfiguring, that no wonder the best temper in the world should be spoiled, or the prettiest lips and eyes in the world glow, and put themselves in a passion! Well, were I a man, and that I am not nobody can be sure—but were I a man and in love, having seen what I have seen, I would bribe my mistress's maid to let me be once a witness to the toilet operation, when it was undertaken with a particular wish to please, or to outshine any particular person.—I would moreover wish her to be particularly stupid on that day, and if my charmer's temper stood this test, I should be quite satisfied of its permanent sweetness.

Ladies, think of the half hour which elapses between the dressing and dinner bells, and confess that I am right.

At length the toilet is finished—the plumes and trains arranged to admiration—every thing complete, and blazing with diamonds; they enter the carriage at one o'clock—away they roll—dash down to Piccadilly, and get into the line at the top of St. James's Street.

If the reader was never in St. James's Street on a drawing-room day, let him, or her, not fail going on the next, for it is really a sight worth seeing—not merely for the ladies and gentlemen who are rolling in their elegant equipages to be

partakers of the splendid scene, and to pay their respects to his Majesty, who, "God save the mark," wishes more than one-half of them, where I must not mention—but for the crowds of gaping, wondering faces that fill the streets, and the balconies, and the windows, from the shops to the attics.

Here, ranged one above the other, all crowding to get the best view of the plumed heads that are passing, may be seen all sorts of people, from the lowest to the upper class of the middling rank of life, all dressed out too in their best—the women smiling, and wondering, and admiring; and the men smirking, and bowing, and flirting, and pretending to point out the different big-wigs, male and female, as they pass: having become acquainted with their faces by watching the calling of the carriages at the opera, which, by the by, is no bad lesson in the vocabulary of names and knowledge of persons of fashion.

But though they all seem delighted to admire the beauty, and fashion, and dress, of the court-goers, how much envy, and sulkiness, and dissatisfaction, does not the contemplation create!—How many hearts are there that beat with all the tumult of ungratified wishes to have been born one of the noble and rich, who excite their envy; and how many of them go home dissatisfied, with what the Catechism denominates "that state of life, to which it has pleased God to call them!"

Poor short-sighted mortals!—as though a diamond stomacher could defend the heart from a pang of sorrow, or a coronet cure a head-ache!

We are too apt to judge of others only by what we see, without considering that by what we permit to be seen of ourselves, we may appear to be objects of envy to others, while we feel that did we unfold ALL that we know of our inward minds and sufferings; that there is more occasion for pity than for envy.

Depend upon it, the goods and ills of society are far more equally distributed among us, than we are willing to acknowledge; but that devilish propensity of our nature to neglect what we have, and to covet that which we have not, will always keep the human heart in a turmoil that will ever prevent it from being easy.

The truest philosophy, when we are inclined to envy a man for his riches, is to immediately imagine him to be subject

to the gout, which prevents his enjoyment of them.—If we envy a woman for the possession of a gay dashing husband, immediately picture to yourself the thousand temptations to infidelity; and that she is so jealous, as never to have a moment's peace.—If we envy a viscount, or a countess, be immediately sure that they have hearts burning with vexation, because the one is not a marquis, or the other a duchess; and if we envy the beauty of a complexion, or the smoothness of a skin, think of the dread the possessor must have of the small-pox, and of old age; and above all, if we are inclined to envy all these things, think in how short a time one tyrant brings every thing to the same level, and that there is no fortune, however large—no rank, however exalted—no pleasure, however piquant—no happiness, however pure—no complexion, however blooming, but must be one day lost in the narrow compass of the grave!

> "Invidious grave!—How dost thou rend in sunder
> Whom love has knit, and sympathy made one!
> Dull grave! thou spoilest the dance of youthful blood,
> Strik'st out the dimple from the cheek of mirth,
> And every smirking feature from the face."

And with this reflection let us go to the drawing-room.

The carriage got into the line at the top of St. James's Street, and here there was no more rolling along at the rate of ten miles an hour. Instead of this rapid motion, their progress was rather about a yard in five minutes; but the slower the carriage moved, the greater the gratification of the spectators and the gratified vanity of the *spectatees*. For here, and what female dares deny it? begin the pleasures of the drawing-room.—It is so sweet a thing to excite envy and admiration!

At the balconies in the club-houses were a few of that class of society, who were entitled to "nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles," kissing of hands and shaking of handkerchiefs, from the plumed and flounced inmates of the carriages The officers on guard too, rode for some little distance by the sides of such carriages as contained their friends; but as for all the rest—all those perched on shop-fronts, or hanging their heads out of window like chickens in a coop, are straining their necks over parapets—and the houses really looked living with people, and St. James's Street itself to be walking with them—they were all *canaille*, and only made to gape

and wonder, as the others imagined themselves created to be gaped and wondered at.

During the stoppage of the carriages, Lady Pomeroy renewed all her previous instructions about slipping through the crowd, so as to avoid the demolition of their dresses; for such accidents often occur amidst the pushing even of such an elegant crowd as that of the drawing-room. How to drop their train to be marshalled by the wands of the pages—and the precise time to take off their gloves; and, in short, all the minutiæ which formed Lady Pomeroy's code of elegant breeding.

At length the carriage drove up to Buckingham House; the two tall footmen were in a moment at the door of the carriage—down went the steps—and out marched Lady Pomeroy to head her little procession.

She had scarcely entered, when a short stout man in a white hat, which he did not take off, hurried up to her, exclaiming, "Lord! Lord! my Lady Pomeroy, how could you come so late?—with two presentations too! Ay, my Lady, I thought you knew better—such an old bird as you are at these here things."

"Oh! dear Mr. Townshend, don't scold me; I trust, with your assistance, we shall be in a very good time," said Lady Pomeroy.

"Time indeed!—time!—you should have been here two hours ago—but here—here's my arm! Young ladies, keep close behind us. I've just been a-scolding the young Duchess of Daintree for being so very late. But come along—come along—better late nor never does not do here." And the little officious bustling man, with his sharp blue eyes and white eye-brows, light-blue coat and nankeen breeches, hurried on Lady Pomeroy and her nieces to the first apartment, where, suddenly quitting them, he started after a person in a court-dress, whom he had actually seen pick a pocket. A sword, bag, and steel buttons, could not conceal the disguised *prig*, as our police-patriarch elegantly called him, from his accustomed eye. He was therefore quickly transferred to a hackney-coach with two of Townshend's myrmidons, while he himself bustled back from the pickpocket to assist women of fashion into the palace, exclaiming, "Oh dear! what with the pickpockets and people of fashion, I don't know *which* is the vurst!"

Lady Pomeroy and her nieces had scarcely entered the

first room, and were looking about for some acquaintance, when hurrying back from the commencement of the crowd, came Charles Trevor.

Agnes' eyes sparkled, and her cheeks became suffused at the sight of him; she thought him on the Continent. It was upwards of three years since they had met, and their looks testified, that three years had brought with it personal improvement to both of them.

"Miss Fleming!" exclaimed he, "I am delighted. What! going to be presented? Pray let me have the pleasure of writing your cards.—Lady Pomeroy, I presume? Pray, Ma'am, let old grudges be forgotten, and condescend to let a Trevor be your cavalier through this crowd, which is really almost impenetrable; and if I may judge by my sides, none of the politest in the use of their elbows."

"Mr. Trevor?" exclaimed Lady Pomeroy, coldly. Agnes looked at her beseechingly; Amelia's face never changed its expression.

"Yes, Ma'am, the same—the same, whom you knew as a boy at Brighton—when I had the honour to dance with Miss Fleming."

"Miss *Agnes* Fleming, if you please, Sir—I remember. But surely you must have a very tenacious memory!" Just then, luckily for Trevor, Mrs. Dashington's school, and Agnes, there came such an influx of company, literally rushing past them, that if it had not been for Trevor's protecting arm, Lady Pomeroy would have been absolutely hurried into the crowd that was making its way towards the presence, without either her cards or her nieces.

Trevor took advantage of this—seized the pen and the cards, and wrote "Miss Fleming, presented by Lady Pomeroy," "Miss Agnes Fleming, presented by Lady Pomeroy." Duplicates of these were quickly made and thrown upon the table; each young lady took the one designed for her. Trevor, in spite of a slight resistance, drew one of Lady Pomeroy's arms within his, while the other held her train, and they took their places at the back of the crowd.

A number of young men who were loitering that they might lose no part of the scene of confusion, for such is every part of the palace on a drawing-room day, excepting the presence chamber and those immediately adjoining, called out after Trevor, but he heeded them not.

They were now fairly in the crowd; new comers had

closed them in, and were pushing from behind, which the struggles of those before to take care of their dresses, and to steer clear of the swords and of the wigs of dignitaries of the church and the law, which were here and there seen like cauliflowers in the crowd, made a mob at Buckingham House very similar to a mob any where else.

These struggles were still more vehement at the approach to any of the doorways, to the narrow spaces of which the people who had occupied a whole room, were obliged to contract themselves to gain a passage to another.

Here Trevor's arm was of great use, and Lady Pomeroy ceased to regret that she had been obliged to him, when she felt the conveniences of passage which his strength and attentions obtained for her and her *protegées* at these perilous passages; for very perilous they were to flounces, feathers, and festoons.

Many ladies were near fainting in these doorways, and excited the compassion of Agnes, in spite of the difficulties of her own progress; though she could scarcely forbear laughing, when she saw the plump face of a short round-about lady actually buried "eyes, nose, and mouth," as children say of the moon, in the full-bottomed wig of a short D.D., who had been thrust back upon her by some sudden reaction of the crowd.

At length, however, they came to a door where their further progress was stopped by the crossed halberds of the gentlemen-pensioners who lined the apartment into which the door led.

Here was the beginning of the appearance of a court—here things were conducted with some of that order, which should certainly characterize the admission of the subject to the presence of the sovereign; and here our party had time to breathe, and to feel some return of that trepidation with which so many young hearts beat on their first presentation.

Lady Pomeroy gave a hasty look at her nieces as they entered this last room, when the halberds were for a moment withdrawn to admit those nearest the door, and Trevor found more favour in her eyes when she saw that their dresses were much less discomposed than those of many of the others, through the exertions he had made in piloting them through the crowd—"Take off your gloves—let go your train, Ma'am," was heard uttered to those immediately before them. Amelia obeyed like an automaton; but the heart of Agnes

leaped to her throat with a mingled sensation of fear and loyalty, as she caught a first glimpse of that court, in the midst of which she saw a monarch whom she had been trained to love, and whose presence and kindness she had never forgotten at the juvenile ball at Brighton.

Their trains dropped—they moved forward, while the attentive pages arranged the half-acres of satin which swept gracefully behind them.

Amelia moved with her accustomed ease. Lady Pomeroy's heart glowed with pride as she saw her bend and rise gracefully as she passed the King ; and it was lucky, that in this admiration of her sister, she did not perceive the agitation which Agnes had great difficulty to conceal.

Agnes had no eye for the moment for any but the monarch, surrounded as he was by all the heroes and statesmen of the age. They were all unregarded ; her whole soul seemed swallowed up with a feeling of loyalty and affection that almost overpowered her. This feeling was plainly depicted in her rising colour and panting bosom ; and she felt then that sensation which in the other sex makes the patriot and the hero.

How indefinable is this feeling, which is inspired by the presence of royalty ! Knox felt it on his first introduction to Mary. Those who sacrificed Charles the First on the scaffold were never free from its influence. Lewis the Sixteenth's presence could animate a whole assembly of the people into shouts of loyalty, though among those people were numbered those who were so shortly to be his murderers.

Agnes did not recover her self-command till she got out of the presence chamber ; but when she first arrived at the top of the stair-case, and looked down over the balustrade into the hall, she was delighted at the splendid *coup d'œil* that presented itself.

It was here that the splendour of the English court was to be appreciated a splendour ; not arising solely from dress and decoration, but from the really fine persons of most of those who compose it.

Foreign courts may outstrip the English in tinsel, and diamonds, and brilliancy, but there is no court in Europe that can exhibit such a number of fine young men and handsome women as ours.

From the gallery Agnes took a survey of the whole scene below, which the blaze of diamonds, glitter of stars, nodding of plumes, and mixture of military with civil costumes

sparkling with gold and silver, rendered almost a realization of some enchantment.

There ladies having recovered from the pressure of the crowd, had leisure for all the "How d'ye dos" of recognition; and to laugh "at the dangers they had passed." Trevor still continued with Lady Pomeroy, in spite of the grave looks and assurances that she was "quite ashamed to trouble him any more." He was too much accustomed, however, to slight any hints that were not exceeding broad ones, to be put off easily; so he went rattling on about his tour, and what he had seen abroad, and drew a comparison between the Spanish, French, and English courts; and in short, rendered himself entertaining, till "Lady Pomeroy's carriage stops the way," hurried them down into the hall, and through the corridor, lest it should be sent on by the police before they could reach the door, in which case Lady Pomeroy, by sad experience, knew that they might have to walk a quarter of a mile to get to it, or be detained for hours till it should again come round in rotation. It was at such times as these that she envied those who had the *entrée*, a privilege which no riches could procure her.

Trevor saw them to their carriage, saying every thing he could to procure even a distant invitation from Lady Pomeroy; but all in vain. It was useless hinting where hints were not intended to be taken. Trevor was therefore at last obliged in saying "Adieu," to add, "that of course, he should feel it his duty to call in Grosvenor Square, to inquire after them."

A cold bow from Lady Pomeroy was immediately followed by drawing up the glass. "Drive on, coachman," exclaimed the Police man—away flew the horses—and home went the two heroines to undress, and lay aside all their drawing-room paraphernalia, except their tiaras and feathers, which were to be again exhibited in Lady Pomeroy's box at the Opera.

The tiaras and feathers, however, were not their only accompaniments in the opera-box: for Trevor took his place beside them, and in spite of the cold looks of Lady Pomeroy, kept his station through the whole of the opera and ballet; elbowed his way with them along the lobby into the concert room, called their carriage, and in fact did every thing in the world to be civil to and amuse Lady Pomeroy, who, on their way home, could not help expressing that they were really very much obliged to Mr. Trevor; to which she added, "And it is a pity he is a younger brother."

CHAPTER XVI.

MATRIMONY.

> But marriage is a matter of more worth,
> Than to be dealt in by attorneyship.
> SHAKSPEARE.

THERE are few events in our short passage through life that are more contemplated by persons of both sexes, or anticipated with greater eagerness, or which produce more bitter or sweeter results, than marriage. Marriage, the end of love; and alas! in how many instances is this end attained?

Love is the subject of the poet—Marriage of the philosopher: the one creates a thousand imaginary blisses, which it is the province of the other to destroy; and yet with thousands of examples before our eyes of the variety of miseries which this connexion produces, unless all the judgment as well as the affections of our nature is exerted in its formation, how many do we see daily and hourly making the desperate plunge, without exerting the foresight of Æsop's frog, of looking into the well before taking the leap. But even Æsop's frog might get out of the well again. But in matrimony, it is *vestigia nulla retrorsum*, and therefore both sexes should look well into the matter before they embark in it, and ascertain what are the real causes which induce them to commit matrimony.

Men should ascertain whether they stand most in need of a wife, an heiress, or a nurse; and whether it is their passions, their wants, or their infirmities, that induce them to wed: and women should ask themselves whether it is a husband, an establishment, or rank, that makes them trust their guardianship to a man. In short, both should know, according to the epigram, whether they are candidates for the state, *propter opus*, *opes*, or *opem*.

Would people put these questions to themselves before they go to the altar, instead of after it, when they thrust themselves

into the mind perforce, and will be answered, I am inclined to think there would not be so many miserable families, nor so much business for Doctors' Commons. A timely understanding of the motives that lead to the altar, would prevent many heart-breaking disappointments, which are often deplorable, often ridiculous, and always remediless. In Mr. Fleming's family, there were almost as many different opinions upon the subject of marriage as there were persons.—His own ideas were entirely confined to his own ambitious projects: as he had himself married entirely for the purpose of connecting himself with people of rank, all his wishes with regard to his daughters had the same end in view. Lady Pomeroy's inclinations were much of the same nature, only that she wished to be the match-maker, and had no idea of either of her nieces choosing for themselves. Amelia's destiny was fixed, as far as the determinations of her father and aunt were concerned; and she was precisely the character to render a compliance with their wishes easy. But Agnes had very different ideas; she had thought for herself—and what was more, had felt for herself; and all these thoughts and feelings had been buoyed up by the nature of her reading. Agnes had lived in poetry, and she felt poetically; being far removed by fortune from the common occupations of life, and in a station which brought her very little in contact with the vulgar realities of existence, she imagined a world of her own, and anticipated a long series of years of happiness flowing from the kindliest feelings of human nature, from love, friendship, and that intercourse of heart, soul, and mind, which look so pretty upon paper, and which sound so sweetly in the numbers of the poet; but which, alas! are as far removed from reality, as the Damons and Daphnes of Virgil, and other pastoralists, with their pipes and crooks, are from the clodhopping hob-nailed Toms, Jacks, and Wills, who drive our pigs to market; and the coarse blousabella Bettys, Sallys, and Winifreds, who milk our cows, and churn our butter and cheese.

She had a kind of romantic feeling of the duration of first impressions, and fell into that very common error, that first love is always the strongest and the purest: that it may be the purest, is much more likely than that it is the strongest; since at the period of life that it is generally experienced, our passions are purer, because they have not attained their maturity; as infancy is always more innocent than manhood.

But that first love is or can be the strongest, if felt in early youth, I much doubt, for the heart has not yet learned the strength of its own feelings. Passion, like every thing else, must grow more powerful by experience, and must be stronger in the full maturity of life than at its commencement.

Agnes, however, could not think so—she was young—she had been pleased—and she thought she loved; and it was agreeably to all her received and cherished notions, that the object of this love should be the youth whom she had first distinguished. Perhaps, too, her love for Lady Emily had encouraged this feeling in no small degree; and Trevor, being a remarkably fine young man, with showy talent and a great flow of animal spirits, a closer acquaintance was not likely to change those feelings in his favour. There was another thing that also worked powerfully for him in her mind, and this was Lady Pomeroy's prejudice against him. Her independent mind naturally revolted against any thing that in the slightest degree savoured of injustice, and her heart always espoused the cause of those whom she considered its victims. Agnes had only seen Trevor in those moments when he had appeared amiable—she recollected with gratitude and pleasure the attentions which he had paid her when a boy—and when he came to her as a fine young man, with a soldier's laurels round his brows, and came too, as the brother of her dearest friend, it was no wonder that gratitude and pleasure should increase to something warmer; and this being the first sensation of the kind, no wonder she gave to it the character of that all-engrossing passion which she had so often pictured in her imagination. Trevor, too, was a passionate and persevering lover: Lady Pomeroy's opposition had acted upon his mind precisely in the same manner in which it had stimulated Agnes, and had made him determine to succeed.

Agnes had thus known him as a boy, and knew him as a man; but she had not known him between these epochs. She had heard indeed of his gallant conduct in the field: she knew his progress from cornet to lieutenant, from lieutenant to captain, and from captain to major; and all this told well for him. But she knew nothing of the progress of his mind and heart during this period; she knew nothing of the developement of his character; she knew how he had lived publicly, but she was utterly ignorant of his private conduct. She knew the direction-posts and mile-stones that

marked his career; but she was utterly ignorant of the scenery between them. She recollected him an engaging boy—she had heard of him as a gallant soldier, and she received him as a passionate lover, and the brother of that friend whom she considered that it would be happiness to call sister; and with all these reflections she gave herself up to the delicious dream of first love, and imagined for Trevor the perfections which he certainly did not possess. And what girl of her age has not done the same?

The determined friendship of Agnes for Lady Emily, and the dislike Mr. Fleming had to offend any person of family, had made her nearly a constant visiter in his house in spite of Lady Pomeroy; and thus Trevor, as her brother, naturally also found a footing, though the old lady kept a very watchful eye upon his conduct: for she was determined that the immense fortunes which both her nieces would have, should never go to support a younger brother, and particularly the cadet of a family, the head of which had formerly offended her pride.

Agnes was too open-hearted, and lived too much on the surface, to enable her to conceal her partiality from such prying eyes; and the consequence was, many a smart discussion upon matrimony, and its prudences and imprudences: in which Lady Pomeroy tried in vain to make a convert of her lively niece to her own principles.

Many a lecture did the old Lady read to the three young ladies as they passed their mornings in their boudoir; and many and fierce were the arguments she used against marriages of mere inclination. But she might have argued and inveighed till doomsday, before she could have changed the notions of Agnes on this interesting subject.

One morning, as usual, something had given rise to their usual discussion. Either what Agnes had said, or something that Lady Emily had just read aloud, made Lady Pomeroy exclaim:—

"Well, well, I wish marriages were made here as they are in France; there they are sensible people, and the parents choose for their children, as they ought to do everywhere, and for the best of reasons; namely, their experience, their knowledge of the world, and of what was best for their children. There the young people had nothing to do with it but to obey their relations, who were not to be misled by love and such nonsense."

"And that, perhaps, my dear aunt," replied Agnes, "is the very reason why there are no such words as home and comfort in the French language. Indeed, there is no necessity for words to describe things which do not exist; and how can home and domestic comfort exist, when those who are to form and enjoy them are brought together without the very essence from which they must derive their existence—mutual affection?"

"Mutual nonsense, my dear; do you think Sir Everard Pomeroy and myself should ever have led such happy lives, if we had married for no other motives than those? or do you think the poor man would have been able to settle such a jointure upon me, and left such a fortune behind him, if we had depended upon mutual affection? I tell you, girls, it is mutual convenience that should lead to marriage; and that a young woman loses her dignity, who does not think of her establishment when she is thinking of matrimony; and depend upon it, that marriages of this sort are generally much more happy than your love matches."

"I quite agree with my aunt," said Amelia, in her affected voice: "prudence is a far surer guide than passion in the choice of a matrimonial establishment."

"Good girl!" said Lady Pomeroy: "you are prudent, Amelia."

"For my part," exclaimed Agnes, "if marriages are to be formed upon such principles, and upon such feelings,—if we may dignify mere mercenary interests with such a term; then why do they mention the name of love in the proceeding? What has love to do with the dirty acres, and paltry ore, and long parchments, which you would persuade me are absolutely necessary to render a marriage happy?—If such is the case, why should not a gentleman make love with his settlement in his hand, and save himself a world of trouble in fine speeches, which mean nothing when they come not from the heart, by laying the parchment at her feet, and saying, There, Ma'am; there are my claims to you as a wife?"

"Oh!" interrupted Emily, who observed the gathering frowns on the brows of Lady Pomeroy and Mr. Fleming, "but recollect, dearest Agnes, riches, or rather competency, and comfort, are not at all incompatible even with your ideas of love; wealth and rank do not necessarily indurate the heart, or banish the warmer and better and dearer feelings of our nature."

"I dare say not," replied Agnes: "I have no doubt there are as good and as warm hearts beneath brilliant stars, and red ribands, and diamond stomachers, as there are under the undecorated garbs of rustics and citizens:—I am contending against the principle of uniting people's estates instead of themselves—the principle of pairing, not matching. Why, my dear Emily, what would you think of a man who proposed for you merely because a portion of your estate interrupted the prospects of his manor-house, or because a few of your thousands were necessary to disencumber his acres—who thinks more of your personal property than your personal attractions, and appreciates the goodness of your land more than the goodness of your heart? For my part, when such marriages are projected, I would waive all the ceremony of love-making; I would forbear to profane all the sacred words which must necessarily form a portion of a lover's proposal. Instead of introducing Mr. Augustus so and so to Lady Emily so and so, I would merely say, 'Permit me to introduce so much 3 per cent Consols to so much Long Annuity; or so many acres in Bedfordshire to so many of the same quality in Bucks.' Instead of saying he has a good heart, I would have them say he has a good house. I would have them visit each other's mansions and establishments, instead of each other; inspect the rent-roll, instead of the feelings of the parties; and let the marriage ceremony be executed like a conveyance, and given under their hands and seals, with two good attesting witnesses. A perfect understanding of each other's estates is all that is necessary on such occasions—'hands and not hearts,' as my favourite Shakspeare has it."

"Ay, Agnes, there it is!" said Mr. Fleming. "It is your poetry spoils you:—you can find an apology for all your odd feelings in the fancies of those who spent their whole lives in imaginary scenes of their own creation, instead of the realities of life. For my part, I see no common sense in any of their productions, and think they ought to be excluded from society for the mischief they do young women. People of fashion should have nothing to do with poetry."

"True," my dear papa, "and poetry has certainly very little to do with them. But I confess—nay, now, don't frown me down—I confess, I would not give up the poetry of life for all its dull and sober realities. I would not barter the imaginings of my own mind—the bright anticipations of

future existence in a union of hearts, and my own ideas of love, friendship, and marriage—poetical ideas, if you please —for all that rank or wealth could give in the most splendid establishment that you could propose. Would you, Emily?" said she, turning her enthusiastic face, lighted up with the energy of her argument, to her friend.

"I certainly would not sacrifice the feelings of my heart for wealth or rank. I certainly would not marry a man with every requisite in the world to make him a good husband——"

"According to my aunt's ideas of a good husband, you mean," interrupted Agnes.

"According to my own," rejoined Emily, "unless I loved him."

"There 's my own dear Emily—I knew you would be on my side. I knew love, and feeling, and enthusiasm, and poetry, would find an advocate in you."

"Not so fast, my dear Agnes, for though I would certainly not sacrifice my feelings for the most advantageous marriage in the world, I would yet never permit my heart to be betrayed into one to which the ideas of imprudence could attach."

"Oh dear, dear!" exclaimed Agnes, impatiently, "there you have spoiled all; your buts, and your doubts, and your qualifications of your sentiments, come like wintry clouds upon a sunbeam—like snow upon a rose—or like pouring water into champaigne: and so you would have a lover calculate income, and rent and taxes, and servants' wages, and the keep of horses, before he makes his proposal; you would have him say with the man in the farce, 'I think once, I think twice, I think three times, that I love you.'"

"Well, and would not that be better than if he were only to think once, and say so, and find that his second thoughts contradicted it?" retorted Lady Emily.

"I really don't now: I love a warm heart; I cannot bear your cold calculating lovers, who, in proposing an elopement, consider how much posting is per mile, and who speak upon feeling and passion as upon a rule of arithmetic."

"And so they ought," rejoined Mr. Fleming; "and if every body did so, we should not have so many ruined establishments—so many estates put out to nurse—so many noble persons compelled to emigrate to the continent for cheap-

ness; depend upon it, Agnes, that marriage should be considered like the Rule of Three."

"Oh stop, for heaven's sake! my dear papa;" for if you are right, I should exclaim with the children, 'The Rule of Three does puzzle me, and Practice makes me mad;' so pray, dear Emily, come to my assistance, and do not let me be alone in an argument against the arithmetic of papa, the proprieties of my aunt, and the prudences of Amelia; for all three will soon beat me out of the field; and I shall be compelled to acknowledge that a rent-roll and pedigree are better accompaniments to a lover than a sword and a lance—an equipage, better than a loving heart—a good jointure preferable to an ardent passion—and worldly advantages better than such a match of love as that which the old play describes, where the husband's prayer is,

> 'To beg one hour of death—that neither she,
> With widow's tears, may live to bury him,
> Nor, weeping, he, with wither'd arms, may bear
> His breathless helpmate to the sepulchre.'"

"And so it is," pursued Lady Pomeroy, whose ears were naturally attracted by the word jointures; "for when the passion is gone, the jointure remains—ay, and—" she stopped.

"And when the husband is gone too—*eh!* aunt—is it not so?" asked Agnes, smilingly.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the incensed lady, as she saw a smile play even around the lips of Mr. Fleming, at this sally of Agnes.

"Brother, brother! you spoil the girl; and permit her to take too much after her mother."

This was a word which always struck upon the tenderest chord of the heart of Agnes; the smiles vanished in a moment—a tear softened the brilliancy of her fine eyes—and, with a faltering, though indignant voice, she exclaimed—

"Oh that I could resemble her!—Oh that I could be all that she was!—If God grant me but to be like my sainted mother—like what I remember her in tenderness and feeling—like what I have been told she was in talent and understanding; my utmost ambition would indeed be gratified, and I should feel that I had indeed a treasure to confer upon a husband."

The energy with which Agnes had uttered these words—the silence which immediately succeeded it—all spoke the

quick transition of her feelings. Her mind was turned in one moment from all the light playfulness of her preceding conversation to thoughts of deep and melancholy interest. Love, marriage, gayety, happiness, seemed all absorbed in her recollection of her mother. All the caresses of that dearly beloved and tenderly remembered parent came upon her mind; the convulsive pressure of her last embrace—the night she had passed in tears and sleep upon her senseless corpse, were all at once conjured up in her vivid imagination; and thus was Agnes always the creature of impulse, swayed by her feelings of the moment; merry and melancholy by turns, her mind and feelings seemed to partake of the nature of the chameleon, and took their colour from the objects which were presented to her heart and imagination.

It was the foresight of this disposition that rendered her mother so anxious for her future welfare:—it was this knowledge of her ardent and easily-excited feelings, that made her the principal object of her care on the bed of death; and it was the regulation of these feelings to which, had she lived, she would have directed all her maternal attention.

CHAPTER XVII.

A YEAR AND A DAY.

The world's a scene of changes.—COWLEY.

In the most romantic history there must be mere matters of fact untinged by the least shade of romance, and so it must be with ours; for it has been truly said that the great sum of human life—the great accounts of happiness and misery—are made up of trifles. In short, to speak more plainly, a long life is like a tailor's or a lawyer's bill, there is a great sum total at the end, made up of very insignificant items in its progress.

The history of the lives of most people, are included in their births, marriages, and deaths. The only biographer the

generality of human beings deserve, is the journalist; and the whole story of their lives is contained in the paragraphs which record the above events.

How seldom, in perusing these daily records of births, marriages, and deaths, which the newspapers contain, do we ever calculate on the importance of the events recorded to the persons themselves! How seldom do we think, when reading the paragraph that announces the birth of an infant son, that there is another being thrown into the world, at all events to struggle through its difficulties, perhaps to regulate its destinies! or of a daughter, that there is another victim to be added to the many—many—many—who have been and are daily immolated at the shrine of licentious passion! When we read of a marriage, how little do we know of the heart-burnings and breakings that it may occasion! of the violations of filial duty which have preceded it! or think of that violation of the conjugal ones which it may produce! and when we read of death after death in the daily obituary, how few of us are there that say to ourselves, There is another and another soul gone to its last account!—

"To that bourne from whence no traveller returns,".

to answer for all the actions of a long life passed in the midst of temptations, and passions, and pains, and pleasures, to which the event recorded in the carelessly-penned paragraph has put an end, and opened to the ethereal and undying spirit a new existence? Yet still all these events must take place in a common as well as in a romantic life; and thus it was in the family of our two heroines during the year and a day of which it is the province of this chapter to give the history.

A character, with some determined propensity to vice of its own, is not half so dangerous, half so little to be depended upon, as that vacillating temper, which is led away by the imitation of others; and which, chameleon like, takes its colours from those by which it is surrounded.

In the one instance, a man is only misled by his own vice; in the other, by the vices of many, pursuing them all by turns.

Such a character was Trevor's; with no decided propensity to any particular vice, he was completely led by those with whom he lived. "Infirm of purpose," with a great dread of ridicule, mixed with a strong passion for pleasure, he was

a complete *girouette*, subject to the variation of every passing wind.

At Eton and at Oxford he had imitated the follies of others. He went to the Peninsula, because every young man of rank had done the same thing. He travelled, after the peace, because he found some of his old comrades had determined on making the tour of Europe: and he indulged in all the vices of all the capitals he passed through, first, to imitate the set with which he lived; and secondly, to escape the ridicule with which any qualm of conscience would inevitably have been visited.

In some of the places where he had stopped in Italy, he had renewed his acquaintance with the Honourable Baronet who had cut such a conspicuous figure in the elopement; the history of which was given in our Chapter XV; and, like every one else who had ever been fascinated into his society, Trevor could not resist its influence, and had been the participator in a number of intrigues, in Rome, Florence, and Naples; until his separation from such a dangerous companion, and a command from his relations at home, had withdrawn him from the dissipation of the continent, and compelled his return to England.

During this period, he had been a partner, or more properly a follower, in many of the wild adventures of our hero; and had been present at, and the witness of, a bet which had been made by him, that within a year he would enter again into London society, and be as well received and as paramount as ever. He had not, however, yet attempted the decision of this wager.

The sight of Agnes (though it did not recall the feelings of his boyish days, for those had long since become extinct, and were nearly forgotten) inspired Trevor with a new passion, which he was fain to persuade himself and her was the continuance of his early love; and he thus presented himself to one who was already prepossessed in his favour, with the additional recommendation of a constancy which, in modern days, both Agnes and her friend Lady Emily decided to be astonishing.

Ignorant how the intervening years had been spent by him, they were neither of them aware of the dangerous tendencies of his character; and though Lady Emily knew something of the vacillation which proved so conspicuous an element

of its composition, she thought that the beauty and virtues of her friend would be the best remedy for this defect.

Agnes was indeed all that man could desire in woman; with a person formed in nature's finest mould; a temper in which sweetness was blended with dignity; and a heart open as the day, with eyes and lips that wept at woe or laughed at merriment. Agnes presented a specimen of the sex, which the proudest man might be proud to have called his own.

Trevor saw and was completely conquered; and with the usual vacillation of his character, every dissipation was immediately given up; he thought himself for about the fiftieth time inspired by a passion which was to last for ever; and so he swore it would, both to Agnes herself and to his sister, whom he found a very useful ally in his pursuit.

The habit of thinking of him, the recollections of their early intercourse, a prejudiced idea of the strength and never-ending influence of a first love, were all favourable things for Trevor in the mind and head of Agnes; and, unfortunately, the Argus eyes of Lady Pomeroy prevented her from forming any other estimate of Trevor's character, than such as she could obtain from short and hurried interviews in mixed society—in assemblies—or at the Opera; and in them he was well calculated to shine, as he had a great gift of small-talk; had read much poetry; could descant plausibly on various subjects; and had, undoubtedly, seen a great deal of the world. Added to this, he was really passionately in love; and love, we all know, will turn dulness into eloquence, to the ear and heart that are prepossessed in favour of the speaker.

Had Lady Pomeroy permitted that unrestrained intercourse between Agnes and Trevor which his sister's intimacy with her might have sanctioned, it is very probable that her penetration might have developed his real character, and thus the danger Lady Pomeroy dreaded, had been avoided; or perhaps the passion of Trevor himself, unfed by opposition, might, with the usual volatility of his character, have gradually subsided, or given place to some new feeling for some other beauty.

While however they met each other so seldom, she never saw him but with his mind and heart in their holyday dress; and never hearing of him except through the medium of his partial sister, she became acquainted only with the favourable parts of his character.

Besides, Trevor knew well how to express his passion; he could talk of love, and feeling, and sentiment: could picture domestic happiness; descant on the intercourse of souls; and converse on all the secret sympathies of the human heart. In short, he was well versed in all the hackneied language of passion, which never appears nonsensical, even to the most penetrating, when the heart is first giving way to the impressions of love.

Trevor thus only presented an outline of his character to Agnes, which her vivid imagination unfortunately filled up with every trait she wished him to possess; and thus she became enamoured with the creature of her own imagination —with what she wished Trevor to be, rather than with what he actually was.

This feeling in such a heart as that of Agnes was rather increased than diminished, by the opposition which he met with from Lady Pomeroy and her father. His being a younger brother, and entirely dependent on the kindness of his relatives and his profession of arms for his income, gave him, in her eyes, an additional claim to her affection. Her generous spirit revolted from such grovelling ideas wealth and station never found an advocate in her bosom and she annoyed both her father and Lady Pomeroy by the frequent disregard of all that they considered desirable in life—rank and etiquette.

Indeed, this was the principal, perhaps the only fault in her character; for conscious rectitude made her so completely regardless of mere punctilio and form, that she was too apt to display an independence of opinion in her remarks which is far from being a pleasing, and is always a very dangerous trait in the character of a young woman.

It was in vain that coronet after coronet was laid at her feet, either by the declarations of their possessors themselves, or through the medium of Lady Pomeroy and her father. It was in vain that the advantages of rank, the extent of jointure, the splendour of establishments, were talked of. Agnes turned a deaf ear to every proposal. She pitied and was silent over the one or two instances of true love which she regretted to have inspired, because they could only create unhappiness; but she ridiculed and triumphed over the many who sought her only on account of the Consols, India bonds, Exchequer bills, and ready cash, which it was well

known would be the portion of either of Mr. Fleming's lovely daughters.

From the moment they came out, Amelia and Agnes had become the mark of all the manœuvring mammas who had sons to marry; and to all the young and dissolute noblemen, who wished for Mr. Fleming's gold to repair the depredations which profligacy and extravagance had made in their estates.

Lady Pomeroy, however, having very early made known the destination of Amelia, Agnes became alone the object of these pursuits; and a very few months were sufficient to disgust her with the selfishness and the indelicacy with which they were prosecuted, as well as with the envy and rancour of those who would consider her as a rival, in spite of all that she could do to prove the contrary. Every refusal was attributed to pride and ambition, and to her wish for a husband of superior rank to any that had yet offered.

The effects created in Agnes' mind during these few months, served greatly to confirm her heart in its original sentiments. She saw too much of *her* world to respect its opinions, and every day added some argument in favour of her own predilection for feeling in preference to form, and continued her in that independence of mind which had so early been one of her principal characteristics.

Wherever talent or genius of any kind existed, no matter the rank or the station of its possessor, it was sure to find a patroness in Agnes; and many were the severe lessons she received from her aunt and father for giving her attention to some poor poet or player, whose talent had made him a path into society; while lordlings were by dozens, waiting for the smiles which she so lavishly bestowed on the efforts of genius.

In the mean time, her feelings in favour of Trevor gained a more decided ground as she perceived the evident injustice done him by Lady Pomeroy. Trevor himself felt this; and it only increased his determination to succeed; for he was a very obstinate man sometimes, and to tell him he should not do a thing, was very frequently only giving him an additional incitement to its accomplishment. He likewise enjoyed the evident and sometimes ludicrous distress his presence occasioned the old lady, and very naturally felt vain of the decided preference which Agnes gave him over all her other admirers.

It was with Lady Emily, however, only, that Agnes conversed on this subject; and they both quite agreed, that though she had a right to refuse to listen to any other proposals, it was clear that she ought not to act in opposition to her father's wishes, on a point so important. As to the wishes of Lady Pomeroy, as Agnes perfectly well knew why they were indulged, she honestly confessed that they had no weight with her; to the old lady's great annoyance, therefore, wherever they appeared, Trevor was sure to appear also. At Howell and James', he was sure to be loitering down the street just at the moment to put them into their carriage. In the Park, his horse could never get beyond the side of their barouche. At dinner, in spite of all Lady Pomeroy's manœuvres, she was sure to see Trevor seated between his sister and Agnes. At the Opera, she might as well have attempted to have removed the pillars of Hercules from their station, as have frowned or hinted Trevor out of her box; for nothing less than main force could have ejected him from the position which he took up every Tuesday and Saturday night of the season, behind the cane-bottomed chair of Agnes. At quadrille parties, if Lady Pomeroy left her *ecarté* table for a moment, she was sure to see Trevor *pas de basque*-ing or *dos-a-dos*-ing with Agnes. In short, go where she would, he was still there; and in the very places where she had calculated he could gain no admittance, the first face she was sure to see was the eternally smiling one of Charles Trevor.

To give one instance of his perseverance:—One night, after the opera, the Fleming carriage was very late. It rained hard; the crush room was crammed to suffocation. Trevor had Agnes in one arm and his sister in the other. Lady Pomeroy was fretting and pining at the delay. At length, when the carriage was announced, there was not another party left in the house but her own. Trevor had been unremitting in his attentions, and having waited thus long, he calculated on supping at Mr. Fleming's, where there was generally a small select party after the opera. Lady Pomeroy was, however, at last determined, under the influence of her ill-temper, to give him the cut direct: and therefore the moment he had put her into the carriage, which she always contrived that he should do the last, that she might prevent any little leave-taking which young lovers are apt to indulge in, she gave him a cold bow, and drew up the glass. Trevor, who had not only calculated on being one of the supper party, but also that he

might make the fifth in Mr. Fleming's coach, and in consequence had ordered his cabriolet to Grosvenor Square at two, looked and felt any way but pleasantly as the carriage lamps flashed by him in their swift career, and left him standing in the midst of a pouring rain, and just under a water-spout. "This is gratitude," thought Trevor; "but never mind, I'll not be outdone," said he, mentally. He looked about, not a hackney-coach appeared. Every link was gone out, and every link-boy gone home. He was still, however, determined not to be cut. There was nothing for him, but dash-splash through mud and mire, which he accordingly did at such a quick pace, that he arrived at Grosvenor Square before the carriage, which had gone round to set Lady Emily down.

Drenched to the skin, he immediately made his way to Mr. Fleming's library, who having been engaged at home, was waiting the return of the Opera party; but a short time elapsed before the carriage drew up to the door.

Lady Pomeroy, who was congratulating herself that at length she had got rid of Trevor, at least for one night, led the way gaily to the drawing-room. "O my dear brother," exclaimed she, "such a night, and such stupid servants not to bring the carriage before; and that eternal Mr. Trevor——." At this moment, the person whom she had taken for her brother turned round, and displayed Charles Trevor himself, in a full suit of Mr. Fleming's clothes. "Bless me, Mr. Trevor!"—"Yes, my dear Lady Pomeroy, here I am: knew you had forgotten to ask me to supper—knew you'd be sorry for it when you recollected it—so I came to save you the pain of repentance—got wet through—borrowed a suit of Mr. Fleming's—and here I am."

Lady Pomeroy stammered something about "regret and pleasure;" Amelia looked placid as usual; Agnes smiled at his assurance, and laughed at his grotesque appearance in her papa's clothes; and the party went to supper. Lady Pomeroy quite discomfited, and almost giving up the contest—so dead beat was she by the perseverance and the perpetual good temper with which Trevor met every rebuff.

Such decided attentions as these could not of course pass unnoticed in a world where so many make a much greater practice of attending to the affairs of other people than to their own. Public report, with busy tongue, soon set down a match between Trevor and Agnes as a determined thing, in spite of all the assertions to the contrary made everywhere

by Lady Pomeroy: who, indeed, made it one great business of her life to contradict this surmise, and to proclaim that her niece's hand was still disengaged; and that she was free to receive any proposals of marriage from any person of a certain rank and fortune.

In the mean time, the other personages of our drama were not idle. Lady Emily's heart and affections were courted and earnestly sought after by the persevering attentions of Mr. Hartley; and esteem for his character was, unknown to herself, gradually ripening into a warmer feeling: so that there were many who knew them, who predicted that only a little time was requisite to transform Lady Emily Trevor into Lady Emily Hartley. But this she most pertinaciously denied when she was accused of it.

Hartley was one of those young men of fortune, of whom we have at present very few. He considered it to be a duty he owed to his tenants to reside a certain portion of the year on his estate, to redress their grievances, and look after their affairs himself, instead of leaving their fate in the hands of some mercenary agent.

The consequence was, that his tenants were happy, never over-rented, and loved their landlord. His oaks and elms still flourished in his forests, and still decorated his park; for no London dissipation and extravagance had condemned them to the axe. His income, though not so great in nominal amount, was more in reality than that of several whose rent-rolls showed double this sum that he did; because there was no rent fixed on farmers, which their produce did not enable them to pay; and Hartley derived more pleasure from the smiling faces of his happy tenantry as he rode through his estate, than he could ever have received from the possession of a few more thousands per annum, produced from their cares and labours.

In short, Hartley was a good specimen of an English country gentleman—not one of your roaring, drinking, fox-hunting squires, who live on their own estates, because they are out of their element, and unendurable everywhere else—but an ornament to the unpaid magistracy of the country—an independent representative of the county in which he was born, and which contained his property, and in every respect a man formed to be one of the pillars of the third estate in the constitution of England.

But with all this, Hartley had but little sentiment; and

Agnes often rallied her friend in the possession of such a mere matter-of-fact lover. He, however, had a fund of good feeling in his heart; and though incapable of that frippery of affection which evaporates in display, he had all the elements of a wholesome and manly love in his composition, and the whole of those elements were engrossed by Lady Emily.

His was not a character to shine in the ordinary course of society; but there were qualities in it which gave a certain resource in all times of difficulty and trouble in the long perfection of existence. He was a man upon whom a woman might safely calculate to find an affectionate and constant protector; and a husband whose love would outlast the gratification of his passion. In short, Hartley was one of those sterling characters that make their way with sensible people; one who would be described as the best creature in the world by one part of it, and a most insufferable bore by the other.

He had made no impression upon Lady Emily at first; her mind and heart were too romantic in their ideas to conceive any thing like love at first sight for such a man as Mr. Hartley. But in her progress through society, when she compared the sterling qualities of his heart and the good sense of his conversation with the more shining, but more superficial accomplishments of others, her reason invariably decided the comparison in his favour in spite of herself.

She saw, too, the dangerous tendency of giving way to the warmth of feeling in the contemplation of the character of her friend; and in time found in the candour and honesty of Hartley, which never permitted any fault of hers to pass without a remark that was calculated to correct it, something more solid to admire and be pleased at, than at the flattery by which she was assailed by a host of more gay and fashionable adorers.

But this increasing influence of Hartley she still pettishly denied, and never acknowledged it even to herself. Her young imagination had dressed up a creature of its own conception as the man who was to rob her heart of its first love; and Hartley was not at all such a man as she had imagined.

"Besides," she would say, "what lover ever hoped to succeed by telling his mistress of her faults?—doubtless she had many," (and this was said with a becoming look of

humility,)—"But a lover ought to be blind to them, at any rate. There were enough envious people who hated her in the world to point out her defects, without a man who professed himself her admirer giving himself that trouble."

Hartley bore all the rebuffs she gave him with patience, because she never forbade the continuance of his suit; and he had too much tact to risk any decided refusal by any decided proposition. But yet he felt he was gaining ground, or at least flattered himself so; and he therefore still continued, contrary to his nature, to pursue her from opera to route, and from party to party: though there was not a place that did not teem with heart-aches for him, as he saw her ear engrossed by the witticism of one, of the heroism of another, or of the flattery of a third. Dancing too, was out of the question with him; and he was therefore condemned to watch her through all the movements of her quadrille, and to feel a twinge every time he saw her hand clasped in that of her partner. Lady Emily, however, almost unconsciously avoided as much as possible all occasions of giving him pangs of this nature.

A secret presentiment that, in spite of the opposition in their present tempers and pursuits, she would one day be his, induced him still to pursue a manner of life which he despised, that he might have his eye continually upon her; and though he never sacrificed his candour in her praise, he did not confine his observations merely to her faults: till Lady Emily at length began to relish praise from Hartley with a feeling of pleasure, at which she was herself surprised. As to her other admirers, they had no fear of Hartley. He was too plain, too unpresuming a person to give them any idea of a dangerous rival; if the thought crossed their mind that he loved her, it was accompanied by a supercilious smile, and a mental comparison between him and themselves, which of course ended much in their own favour. They could never imagine that the country-gentleman, as he was called, could have any attractions for the gay and beautiful Lady Emily Trevor, and they laughed when her brother would sometimes state his opinion, that the tortoise would win the race at last.

For his own part, Hartley had in truth often repented the circumstance of his falling in love with a being apparently so dissimilar to himself, and lamented that he had not stifled his passion at its commencement; but it was now too late: Lady

Emily had become necessary to his happiness, and he was determined to persevere while there was the slightest hopes of success.

Wherever, therefore, Lady Emily went, there also was Hartley, watching her with the anxious eye of a guardian lover; sometimes endured, often scolded, but always attentive. He would designate himself her Mentor—she called him her tormentor; but in spite of their numerous disagreements, their hearts were coming to a better understanding every day, and Lady Emily felt herself better and better pleased, and much more gratified by the honest, ardent attachment of the plain Mr. Hartley, than she did with the fulsome attentions and flatteries of a dozen others, who rank themselves among the finest young men about town.

At this period, one of Mr. Fleming's boroughs becoming vacant, Henry Pomeroy was recalled from the Continent, where he had been travelling since he had taken his degrees at Oxford, to fill the vacant seat, and to accomplish the project of his mother and uncle, by marrying Amelia.

An alternate series of dissipation and study had driven Miss Wheeler from his heart, indeed from his remembrance. Still, when his thoughts recurred to that adventure, a burning blush would mount into his cheek, and his mortified vanity rouse him into invectives against the whole sex. Her deception had indeed given a dreadful chill to the warm feelings of his heart, and from that period till the present, he had been utterly indifferent to women. The sight of Amelia, however, whose beauty was really of the first order, and the idea that she was destined for his wife, once more made him feel that he had a heart capable of loving; and the moment that this was felt, the natural impetuosity of his character returned.

His senses were captivated with the beauty of his cousin; and deeming the coldness of her disposition to arise from mere maiden bashfulness, he entered with avidity into the schemes of his mother, as far as it regarded his union with Amelia.

Not so, however, with respect to the political schemes for the aggrandisement of the family, projected by Mr. Fleming. As to the change of name from Pomeroy to Fleming, that was perfectly indifferent to him, but in all the points of political opinion, they were as far asunder in their ideas as the antipodes.

Young, ardent, and impetuous, Henry thought, acted, and spoke, upon the principal points of modern politics, with a freedom of discussion that astonished and alarmed Mr. Fleming, who had never thought at all, but blindly followed in the track pursued by whoever happened to be in power.

Catholic Emancipation—Parliamentary Reform—the Abolition of Slavery—the Reduction of Taxes—March of Intellect—were the themes upon which Henry Pomeroy indulged, in the full power of youthful eloquence; and Mr. Fleming trembled, lest the schemes of ambition which he had been so long pursuing, should be destroyed by the maiden speech of his nephew.

These schemes had gradually increased in their extent, as he had felt the accumulation of his influence, since his accession by purchase to two more boroughs; and dreading lest the impetuosity of Henry's temper might undo all that he had been so long doing, he called him into the library to detail the whole of his projects. In this conversation, no longer content with a baronetcy, he stated that he had not only hinted at his expectations of a peerage, with a remainder to his nephew, but that it had actually been promised him; and this, accompanied by such talents as Henry possessed, he foresaw might lead to the highest honours of the state.

Upon his favourite topic, even Mr. Fleming could be eloquent, and he portrayed to Henry all the splendours and advantages which awaited his adoption of the same political opinions with himself. Henry, however, was obstinate; he would submit to no compromise. If he accepted a seat in parliament, it must be with complete independence as to his "ayes and noes."

It was in vain that Mr. Fleming attempted to show the absurdity and folly of playing a game by which he could get nothing. Henry was obstinate, till his uncle, for the first time in his life, fell into a passion, dismissed him with violence, and determining to marry again, and have an heir of his own, to accomplish those darling schemes of ambition, which he had so long contemplated with delight, went to bed, and was found by his servant the next morning dead. Such an unusual event as a fit of passion had thrown the blood into his head, and occasioned apoplexy; and thus ended all the ambitious schemes of Mr. Fleming.

CHAPTER XVIII.

My love admits no qualifying dross.

——————Lord Angelo is precise,
Stands at a guard with envy, scarce confesses
That his blood flows, or that his appetite
Is more to bread than stone.
SHAKSPEARE.

The extreme coldness of Mr. Fleming's disposition, and his steady pursuit of his ambitious projects, by shutting up all the kindlier feelings of his nature, had rendered him a person whose loss, either as a parent or friend, could not create any violent or lasting grief.

The most important event attending his death, was the opening and reading his will; by which it was found that the young ladies were made wards in Chancery, with a recommendation to be placed under the care and superintendence of their aunt—whose consent was in some measure rendered necessary to their marriage, by a large sum of money being made dependent upon its being obtained, and which was to be forfeited if either of her nieces married without it, and left entirely to the disposal of Lady Pomeroy.

A very few months were sufficient to dry the tears and console the mourners for Mr. Fleming's loss; and this man, so important in his own estimation, and without whom he actually thought the machine of the world could scarcely move, became nearly, if not totally, forgotten.

The family began to think of renewing all the projects of alliance which his death had intercepted. Trevor became again the same persevering persecutor of Lady Pomeroy that he had been before; but Lady Pomeroy had now more power, and determined to exert it.

Convinced that nothing could tend so much to the misery of Agnes as her marrying a younger brother, with such remote contingencies as Charles Trevor, she set her face decidedly against the match, and took upon herself to forbid his visits and attentions; and the more effectually to break off all intercourse between the young people, she also requested that Lady Emily would cease to be so constant an inmate of Grosvenor Square, and commanded Agnes to give up her friend.

Agnes, however, acknowledged no such authority as that which Lady Pomeroy seemed inclined to assume; and though she said nothing about Charles Trevor, she loudly protested she would not break off her intercourse with his sister—the friend of her childhood, the school-fellow of her heart.

Lady Pomeroy was too firmly convinced that while this *liaison* existed, there was no chance of the brother's being discarded, to give up her point; and she determined to carry it, by removing to Fleming Hall, where no mixed society and large parties afforded the facilities for meeting, which were of course to be found in the circles of London. All her attempts were, however, attended with precisely the contrary effects to those which she anticipated; for the greater her opposition, the more determined and pertinacious became Trevor to succeed, and the more Agnes thought she saw the injustice of her aunt.

To do Lady Pomeroy justice, she had latterly been rather more particular in her inquiries with respect to Trevor; and in the midst of her questions of how many removes he was from the family-title, and what expectations he had from his numerous connexions, she had heard tales of vacillation of principle and of dissipation, upon which she determined to ground her opposition to the match; and trusted to do so with more success, when it was his character and conduct she condemned, rather than his want of fortune.

The fact was, that during the very short cessation of his intercourse with Agnes that Mr. Fleming's death had necessarily occasioned, he had fallen in with some of his former associates, and had been shamed by their ridicule into many of his old pursuits.

Lady Emily had witnessed this with pain; and was rejoiced when Agnes, again mixing in society, recalled her brother from a path, the pursuit of which must have lost her to him

for ever: for, after all, it was the apparent constancy of his attachment that had the greatest charm for Agnes.

Reports, however, of this temporary defalcation of Trevor having reached the ears of Lady Pomeroy, she was not long in making them additional arguments against his encouragement by Agnes; but unfortunately the eagerness with which she used these arguments and repeated these rumours, defeated her own projects, and only tended to confirm Agnes in the idea she had formed of the unjust prejudices of her aunt.

To the same account, or to the score of envy, were also placed several hints of the same nature, which she received from various intimates in her circle. But as these were also intimates of Lady Pomeroy, she attributed all they said to her instigation.

One circumstance about this time made a deeper impression on her mind than all these reports; which was an anonymous intimation to the same effect, which she found one night on her dressing-table. It was written in an old-fashioned handwriting, and ran thus:—

Proceed not hastily—listen to your friends. Trevor is not the man you suppose him to be. What his affection and your influence may effect, is still in the womb of time: but sacrifice not your happiness to an uncertainty. Your mind, disposition, temper, and pursuits, are dissimilar. He is vacillating and volatile, though ardent. If your heart be too far engaged to give him up entirely, at least take time: try his constancy by absence. It is the advice of one who knows him better than you can—of one to whom your happiness is dearer than his own.

No inquiry that Agnes could make enabled her even to guess at the writer of this epistle; to which, in spite of her habitual contempt of anonymous information, she could not help giving more attention than she afterwards thought it deserved. The last sentence, however, admitting a misconstruction, and suggesting the idea that it might be the production of a rival, it was soon classed among the many other futile attempts to set her against Trevor. The handwriting too was so remarkable that it appeared feigned; and the letter might therefore be the production of one of the many whom she knew her aunt employed to induce her to give up her lover.

At length, Lady Pomeroy's pursuits permitted her tempo

rary migration from the scenes of gayety and London to the retirement of Fleming Hall; and thither she compelled Agnes, much against her will, to go, without her friend Lady Emily. Indeed, their party being merely a family one, they were accompanied only by Henry Pomeroy, whose nearly approaching marriage with Amelia rendered him her incessant attendant, and a Miss Eudocia Turner, a distant relation of the family, who had come to reside with Lady Pomeroy since the death of Mr. Fleming, and whom that Lady had found particularly useful in discovering certain little peccadilloes committed by Trevor, of which she had not failed to make use in her arguments against him with Agnes.

Miss Turner was one of a very numerous class of females who exist upon scandal, and who spend one-half their time in ferretting out the secrets of their neighbours, and the other in giving their advice where it is never wanted, and seldom followed. She began every sentence with—"Well. if I were in your place, I should do so and so;" and generally finished with—"But there are people who will never follow advice till it is too late."

She was poor and ugly, and envied every body who was rich and handsome. But she was artful and insinuating; a great flatterer of the frailties and weaknesses of those with whom she lived, and consequently a favourite with all who did not see through her duplicity.

To Lady Pomeroy she had become necessary, both as a spy and a flatterer. She was the very echo of her opinions—the strenuous advocate of every thing she urged—lamented with her in private over the obstinacy of Agnes with regard to Trevor, and in public trumpeted her patroness's knowledge of the world, her affection for her nieces, and in short every thing that was regarded by Lady Pomeroy in the light of virtues. No wonder, therefore, that Lady Pomeroy's confidence in Miss Turner soon became unbounded; and among other instances of the use which she made of her was, that of deputing her to prevent any private conversation between Agnes and Trevor, whenever chance threw them together in the same parties, and to keep a perpetual watch that no private interviews took place between them. For this latter there was no occasion—Agnes was too conscious of the purity of her intentions to conceal them: she rejoiced when the chances of society, or a morning's drive, threw Trevor in her way; but she had never thought of, or sanctioned one of

his pressing entreaties to grant him any other interview than those which were thus afforded.

She had honestly confessed her affection for him, and openly stated her intention to marry him when the age of twenty-one should make her her own mistress. To this she had been driven by all the injustice she considered had been done to him; but she had hitherto resisted every attempt on his part to hasten their marriage.

Miss Turner, however, had a different object in view than that of preventing Agnes from marrying Trevor. She knew of the clause in Mr. Fleming's will, by which a large sum of money was to be placed at the entire disposal of Lady Pomeroy, in case of the marriage of either of her nieces against her consent; and she calculated, should Agnes so offend, that a portion of this money would at any rate be the reward of her services at Lady Pomeroy's death; and as she knew Lady Pomeroy's fear of what the world might say would prevent her giving it to the niece that was to marry her own son, she was not entirely hopeless, but that the whole might become hers: a natural supposition, considering her relationship and the favouritism with which Lady Pomeroy treated her, and the dislike she entertained of Trevor. With this object in view, no wonder that she rather promoted than prevented the interviews of Trevor and Agnes; though all this was done so carefully, as never to excite the suspicion of Lady Pomeroy, and with a salvo to her own conscience, which characters of this description are never at a loss to find or to create. Her complacency to the wishes of Agnes and Trevor, or rather her anxiety to promote her own views, would have carried her much farther; but the real delicacy of Agnes prevented the necessity of such a concession, and her hints to that effect were either misunderstood or wilfully neglected.

Placed upon her as a spy, Miss Turner was of course aware of the mutual affection and understanding of the lovers, but she was never the chosen confidante of Agnes; who was merely grateful because she did not make a disagreeable office annoying—an office, which she told Agnes she had only accepted that it might not be delegated to one less kindly intentioned; while, by a thousand little inventions, she preserved the confidence of her employer, and artfully kept up her indignation against Trevor.

The journey into the country threatened in her mind to

give the death-blow to her hopes, for the prudence of Agnes had led her to doubt the strength of her affection ; and she dreaded that absence might really estrange the lovers from each other, and finally prevent the disobedience upon which those hopes were founded.

When therefore she saw the unfeigned sorrow of Agnes at this determination of her aunt, and heard the passionate indignation with which the intelligence was received by Trevor, she could scarcely forbear to hint that a secret correspondence might still be kept up through her means. She knew Agnes, however, too well to imagine she would consent to such a step, and she therefore reserved her hint for Trevor himself.

Trevor, however, did not want this hint. He was one of the most impatient men in the world, and could ill brook the delay which Lady Pomeroy's opposition put to his wishes. His whole time in London was spent in contriving interviews with Agnes ; the only moments he numbered as those of existence, were those spent either in the plotting or the accomplishment of these interviews. He kept a constant spy upon the house in Grosvenor Square, who had a messenger at command, to give the earliest intimation of the movements of the family. His servants were ordered to cultivate an intimacy with those of Lady Pomeroy's establishment, that opportunities of seeing Agnes might be multiplied by the information they might obtain. His saddle-horse was in constant requisition during the day, and his cab during the night, till Lady Pomeroy was tired out with his perpetual appearance in her path. All this kept alive Trevor's passion ; two objects were gratified at once ; his wish to see Agnes, and his desire to annoy Lady Pomeroy : and these petty schemes occupying his whole time, he had none to bestow on any other pursuit that might have led to the diminution of his passion. In their parting interview—which took place at Lady Trevor's, where Agnes had gone, in spite of Lady Pomeroy, to take leave of her friend—Trevor, for the first time, most vehemently urged his entreaties for a private marriage ; reproached her on her refusal with not loving him ; and, in short, acted in all respects the madman lover forcibly separated from his mistress.

The heart of Agnes was alive to all he said and all he felt ; but she was supported in her refusal by the firmness and discretion of her friend Lady Emily, through whom alone she was

to hear of her brother. This passionate vehemence however of Trevor, had its weight with Agnes; and the disinterestedness with which he was willing to sacrifice so large a portion of her fortune by acting in opposition to the wishes of Lady Pomeroy, rather than wait a few months in the hope of her consent, raised him, if possible, in her esteem, and gave her that delightful certainty so dear to a woman's heart, that she was loved for herself alone.

The family were soon settled at Fleming Hall; and Agnes trusted that at least her love for the country, and taste for the beauties of nature which she possessed, might be indulged uninterruptedly: but she soon found that Lady Pomeroy had another object in view in this visit to the country, besides the separation of herself and Trevor.

An Earl, whose estate was in the same county, had been one of those rejected suitors, whose pretensions had been espoused by Lady Pomeroy; and it was with the view of renewing his addresses, that she had chosen Fleming Hall as the place of her retreat. For this purpose she had come to an understanding with Lord Courtown, who, it was settled, should follow her very speedily into the country; and the distance between their respective residences was too small to prevent an unrestrained intercourse of their families.

As Lord Courtown was a man precisely after Lady Pomeroy's heart, it may be easily supposed that he was as precisely the contrary with regard to Agnes.

He was handsome, noble, and rich; but he was cold, formal, and punctilious: a perfect courtier in his heart and his manners; he made love *à la* Sir Charles Grandison, and chilled by his politeness where he wanted to warm by his attentions.

Such a man was the last upon earth to touch such a heart as that of Agnes; and yet he was so perfect with regard to the negative virtues, that she could pitch upon no decided fault upon which to ground her refusal of him, or to rescue herself from the charge of caprice in declining his addresses. This very circumstance rendered these addresses doubly insupportable; and though his perseverance, encouraged by her aunt, annoyed her, he was too unpresuming to quarrel with, and too grave and polite to be laughed at.

As Henry Pomeroy was completely occupied in making passionate love to the insensible Amelia, and was scarcely ever a moment from her side; and as Lady Pomeroy occu

pied Miss Turner's attention, poor Agnes was condemned to the perpetual assiduities of her polite lover, till she was frequently fain to fly from him, and bury herself either in the solitude of her own room, or the shady recesses of those magnificent groves of trees with which Fleming Park abounded. For this place had descended to the late owner by a long line of ancestors, and had become Mr. Fleming's property through the joint extravagance of its former possessor and his heir, by whom the entail was cut off, for the consideration of the temporary convenience which the purchase-money afforded.

It was in her solitary rambles among the woods of the park, the openings of which commanded magnificent prospects of the surrounding country, that Agnes derived her only enjoyment. Her thoughts divided between her book, her friend, her lover, and the beauties of nature; she gave herself up to the day-dreams of her imagination, and lived through life's perspective with all the sanguine anticipations of a youthful and romantic mind.

Miss Turner had just enough knowledge of human nature to judge, that in such a mind and heart as Agnes possessed, the solitude of the country, and the beauties of nature, were more likely to nourish than to repress a growing passion; she rejoiced, as she observed the total impossibility of Lord Courtown's being the successful rival of Charles Trevor: and while she lamented over the obstinacy of her niece with Lady Pomeroy, she, by every insidious means in her power, did all she could to keep alive the recollection and affections of Agnes for her lover. She pretended not to know of the correspondence which was kept up between Agnes and Lady Emily, although she was employed expressly by Lady Pomeroy to give her intelligence of every letter which Agnes received; and this ignorance was so insidiously assumed, that Agnes herself could only suspect that it was feigned, and was frequently uncertain whether she was wilfully or absolutely blind to the correspondence which existed.

Had the whole of this correspondence been laid open, there was not a line of which she would have been ashamed; for even the few lines which Lady Emily sometimes permitted her brother to write at the end of her letters, were as respectful as they were passionate.

Trevor's, however, was not a love to permit him to exist long in this quiescent state. It required food and action to

keep it alive; and a very few weeks determined him at all events and risks to follow Agnes into the country. This was a determination no sooner made than acted upon; and unknown to his sister, of whose disapprobation of such a step he was certain, he started one morning as fast as a chaise and four could carry him into the neighbourhood of Fleming Hall.

At first he had determined driving directly to the Hall itself; but recollecting that Lady Pomeroy might take it into her head not to receive him, by which means he would be obliged to retreat, and having roused her suspicion she might prevent his meeting with Agnes by any other means; he more prudently left his carriage at a town a few miles distant, and took up his quarters at a little inn in the village, of which Fleming Hall was the manor house.

Miss Turner, who sought for all the news of the neighborhood, soon heard of the arrival of a stranger at the "Fleming Arms," for so had the ostentatious master named the dragons and lions that glittered on a field argent over the door of the village inn. Having from the first calculated upon such an event, Miss Turner was not long in ascertaining that it was Trevor himself; and from the moment she knew he was in the neighbourhood, she foresaw the effect of such perseverance on such a mind as that of Agnes, and secretly hoped that his visit would end in that event which would give her the chance of the fortune which was the object of her wishes.

It may be easily imagined that Trevor was not long in seeking an interview with his mistress. Her solitary walks soon afforded him the opportunity of pleading his cause. At first she avoided him, and sought to induce his return; but soon the pleasure of seeing him, the tacit encouragement of Miss Turner—for she was too cunning ever to commit herself by words—the conscious rectitude of her own intentions, and her decision at some time or other to be his wife, led her to permit his intrusion on her rambles. Trevor's was a mind that took its colour from the circumstances by which he was surrounded: to be alone, and unknown at a retired village inn, appeared romantic, and his imagination became tinctured with romance; he wandered with a beautiful girl amidst the beauties of nature—heard her descant eloquently upon the prospects on which they gazed, and he became an enthusiastic in scenery. Every day their minds seemed more assimilated to each other, and Miss Turner soon saw how it would end. She knew how all these contemplations of nature would soften

the heart, and all her care was to act so that when the event took place, no suspicion of her previous knowledge might occur to Lady Pomeroy.

Lady Emily soon guessed the course in which her brother had directed his flight, for flight it literally was, and wrote letter after letter to urge his return; for she, with all her warmth of friendship for Agnes, had prudence enough to wish that so large a portion of her fortune should not be sacrificed, while there was even a remote chance of Lady Pomeroy's consent.

But when, under such circumstances, were prudent remonstrances ever attended to? Clear blue skies, green meadows, rippling streams, shady groves, and moonlight nights, had their due influence upon the minds of Trevor and Agnes. He thought he could live amidst them for ever, and for her alone; and she knew and felt she could for ever with him.

All that Miss Turner could do, was to think of the proverb of *Vogue la galère;* be blind to all she saw and knew, and keep Lady Pomeroy in the dark.

At length, Lady Emily having been kept nearly a week without hearing a word either of Agnes or Trevor, determined to join her brother; and either persuade him to return, and wait patiently the event of Lady Pomeroy's change of mind, or urge their immediate marriage; a step she thought much more prudent, than the risk which secret interviews must run of compromising Agnes in the eyes of her aunt and of the world.

Arriving at the inn where her brother had been living incognito, and finding that he was out upon what the landlady called "one of his solitary rambles," she immediately took the path pointed out as the direction in which Trevor always walked, and set out in pursuit of him; little doubting but that she should find her friend at the same time.

This path led along the side of the rivulet, which gradually increasing, formed a fine stream at the entrance of Fleming Park, and was bordered by large groves of chestnuts and sycamores. As Lady Emily gazed on the scene around her, heard the hum of the insects as they fluttered in the sunbeams, and contemplated the distant hills, the sparkling waters, and felt the loveliness of the whole scene; she foresaw too well its influence on hearts that were inclined towards each other, to doubt their effects on Agnes and her brother.

It was in a little plantation on a mount that commanded one of the best views of the surrounding country, that Lady Emily caught the first sight of the objects of her search.—They were engaged in such earnest conversation, that her approach was unnoticed. Trevor was pleading, Agnes was gently resisting; but at the moment that Lady Emily was near enough to hear the purport of their argument, Agnes cried, in a faint and murmuring tone—

"Well, Charles, if your sister—If you can prevail upon your sister to sanction such a step,—if she will—but I know she will not——"

"Oh finish the sentence," exclaimed Trevor impatiently: "finish, I beseech you."

"No, no, no," said Agnes. "I cannot, cannot. Besides, without my aunt's consent, you know my fortune will be most considerably diminished."

"Fortune," exclaimed Trevor indignantly; "name it not. Do you, can you think that money and Agnes ever entered my imagination at the same moment? I wish you had none; I wish you had no hope of any. I am sorry you will still have enough to make our marriage appear a prudent one on my side in the eyes of the world; it has only to know you, only to see you by my side, charming as you are, to convince the most censorious that I could have but one motive in seeking you for a wife."

Agnes hesitated; a series of these interviews, the real superiority of Trevor in the solitude of the country to the Trevor she had known partaking of the dissipation and follies of the town, the pertinacious obstinacy of Lady Pomeroy, and the tormenting perseverance of Lord Courtown, all concurred in Trevor's favour; and she whispered a consent to an immediate marriage, provided Lady Emily and his mother could be brought to sanction it, at the very moment that Lady Emily stood before them, having evidently overheard the latter part of their conversation.

Agnes hid her blushing face in the bosom of her friend, and Trevor was in raptures at what he called the providential appearance of his sister.

Lady Emily, though she came to prevent such a step, could not long resist the ardent entreaties of a beloved brother, particularly when a compliance with them accomplished one of the first wishes of her heart, and as she was conscious that Lady Trevor was as anxious for the marriage as herself.

Situated as Agnes was with respect to age and guardianship, there were yet many difficulties to be overcome: all these, however, appeared trifles in the eyes of Trevor. Their names would no doubt pass unobserved amidst the multitude of first, second, and third times of asking, in a London church. It was determined therefore that the names of Charles Trevor and Agnes Fleming should be thus coupled the very next Sunday; and also, that the moment the banns were published, Lady Emily should come down and accompany her future sister-in-law to the house of Lady Trevor, with whom she was to go to receive the sanction of the church to her union.

The intervening fortnight appeared an age to Trevor, and but as a moment to Agnes. Having consented to take the step, and being perfectly conscious that Lady Pomeroy and her sister were quite aware that one day or other she would certainly marry Trevor, since she had more than once asserted such an intention, Agnes did not feel as though she were acting a concealed part. Yet it was a step of so much importance to her future happiness, that she could not view the coming change without a trembling and an anxious heart.

At this period, luckily for Trevor, Lady Pomeroy went away on a visit to a distant part of the county for a few days, placing a perfect reliance on Miss Turner's watchfulness, and being deceived by that person's having led her to believe that Agnes had lately listened with a more favourable ear to her counsels, with regard to resigning all ideas of Trevor, and paying a more implicit obedience to the wishes of her aunt.

Lady Pomeroy's absence gave Agnes the leisure and opportunity of preparing for her approaching departure; and, without making any absolute confidant of her intentions, she made these preparations without any view to concealment. To all this Miss Turner was not only wilfully blind, but she continued very artfully to blind the eyes of others also, by the colouring she gave to the evident anxiety of Agnes. Indeed, so far from preventing the proceedings of Agnes, or of giving Lady Pomeroy any intelligence of her suspicions, she even gave her many distant hints that any thing she might wish to have done, after she had left the Hall, should be attended to; such a faithful guardian of the wishes of her patroness did Miss Turner prove.

At length the banns were published, and the appointed

morning arrived. Although she pretended ignorance, Miss Turner was perfectly aware of the intentions of Agnes; and to facilitate them, she took great care to give employment to every one who might think it their duty to apprise either herself or Lady Pomeroy, of what was going forward, while it was yet time to prevent the accomplishment of that upon which she grounded her own hopes of fortune.

The maid of Agnes was to accompany her; and it was determined that Lady Emily's carriage should take them both up at the Park-gate. Agnes rejoiced in the absence of Lady Pomeroy, only as it prevented any scene of altercation; every thing conspired to the wishes of the parties; Agnes arrived at Lady Trevor's at night, and in the morning, in the presence of nearly the whole of his family, she became the wife of Charles Trevor.

Miss Turner continued wilfully blind the whole morning, keeping out of the way of every body who might have informed her that Miss Agnes Fleming had quitted the Hall; but taking most especial care to examine her apartments, and every thing that she had left behind her, that nothing might remain that could implicate her in any previous knowledge of her intentions.

She was perfectly aware that Agnes herself more than suspected her connivance at Trevor's project; but she knew the generosity of her heart too well to have the slightest fears that she would betray her to Lady Pomeroy; and this is unfortunately an advantage which duplicity always possesses over generosity. In the *lutte* of life, those who can descend to its meannesses and its falsehoods, will ever succeed better than those, who tread only in the paths of sincerity and truth.

It was not till after the second dinner bell had sounded that Miss Turner chose to discover the flight, if it could be called such, of Agnes. With well affected surprise and terror, she then communicated the intelligence to Henry Pomeroy and Amelia. The household were interrogated, and an express immediately despatched to inform Lady Pomeroy of the event—Miss Turner being now well aware that the utmost expedition could not prevent the completion of the nuptials.

Lady Pomeroy's immediate return and violent indignation, confirmed Miss Turner in all the hopes of the success of her schemes; hopes which she did not hesitate to increase, by

details of the deceit which had been practised upon herself to accomplish the flight of Agnes without her knowledge.

For once, however, such a nefarious project was destined to be successless. The very same post which brought a letter announcing the marriage of Agnes, also communicated to Lady Pomeroy that, in consequence of the death of an uncle, Trevor had become the proprietor of a rich inheritance.

This, together with the idea that he was but two removes from the earldom, and that one of his elder brothers was consumptive, and the other unmarried, completely softened Lady Pomeroy's indignation; and Miss Turner was herself compelled to write the letter which forgave the new-married pair, and invited the Trevor family to Fleming Hall, to assist in the settlement of that fortune, so great a portion of which she had hoped to appropriate to herself.

During the progress of this marriage, among other little instances of duplicity, Miss Turner had often hinted both to Agnes and Trevor, that Lady Pomeroy's anger would only be that of the moment, and that she would doubtless soon forgive them; but at that period she little thought that her words were so soon to be verified.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HONEY MOON.

Now can I break my fast, dine, sup, and sleep,
Upon the very naked name of Love.

The weak impress of Love is as a figure
Trench'd in ice; which with an hour's heat
Dissolves to water, and doth lose his form.
SHAKSPEARE.

It appears to us, that the old romance and novel writers (we do not allude to those of the days and style of the Ma'amselles Scuderys, but to those of five-and-twenty years since) were wrong in finishing the history of their heroine with her marriage.

Marriage is rather that era in which the most interesting part of a woman's memoirs begins, and at any rate is the commencement of a new existence.

New and delicious ties attach her to life—new prospects open to her view—new and sacred responsibilities arise around her to be fulfilled—she is entering into all the reality of that which she has hitherto been anticipating—and no longer a girl, she looks round the world and through society with an air which seems with proud consciousness to declare that—she is a woman.

In France, in Spain, and in Italy, marriage is an emancipation from restraint; rather degrading proofs of which may be found in the *cortejos* and the *cavaliere servente* in the two latter countries, and in the numerous little *liaisons*, known by the name of *arrangements* in the first.

But in England, thank Heaven, even in our upper circles, marriage is still presumed to entail new and serious duties, and for a woman to swerve from them in any flagrant degree, is to be shut out from society, and to lose the best privileges of her caste. Matrimonial infidelity may exist, but it must be supposed not to exist, to entitle a wife to her admission into company. She must "assume a virtue if she have it not;" and those who discard the reality are compelled to pay a tribute of respect to virtue by the preservation of its appearance.

Whether there is justice in the unequal visitations which attend male and female dereliction from matrimonial duties, it is not our province to inquire; we write of the "things that be," and not of the things that ought to be; and our readers may thank their stars that it is so, for an elaborate detail of the things that ought to be would occupy twenty volumes instead of two.

The history of a girl while single is, in general, a mere detail of childish pursuits; having parents for guardians, she seldom thinks for herself—she has always a certain guide by which she can regulate her conduct, and an *appui* upon which she rests for its support; and her passions and feelings being still under the restraint of education, their real character is seldom developed; and the minds of most of them being bent principally on the formation of an establishment, or rather, their minds being directed to this as the principal aim of their lives, for I much doubt whether a girl turns her thoughts to it naturally until some incipient passion springs in

her heart—they think of nothing else, and are astonished at the new world that seems to open upon them, when they find themselves clothed with the character and responsibility of a wife.—"*Comment le monde s'aggrandit à mes yeux*," was the exclamation of a young and happy French bride within a few days after her marriage.

Women also when married immediately imagine themselves their own mistresses. For all the laws of subservience upon this subject, and which really give the husband the legal power to be the veriest tyrant under the sun, never enter into the mind of the young wife. She fancies her husband the slave he has professed himself to be instead of herself, and acts accordingly.

No longer under the necessity of taking with her a *chaperone*, she feels for the first time that she can not only go alone, but that the magic of the marriage ceremony—the fairy title of mistress, gives her the power to *chaperon* others, who may be older and more experienced than herself.

She is no longer condemned to be the last handed down stairs to dinner—no longer doomed to follow in the wake of a long train of petticoats and flounces when the hostess gives the signal for departure to the drawing-room, by an elegant bend to the married ladies at her table.

All these are privileges, the value of which men do not appreciate; their ambition is fixed on higher objects; they give precedence to things far more worthy and of a far higher order in the history of society—to red and blue ribands and embroidered garters.

Much is written—much thought—and much said on the dangers of young and inexperienced women in the world; but in modern and good society this risk is merely imaginary as far as it regards single women; no one presumes to address a whisper in the ear of a young unmarried woman, unless he has some remote ideas of matrimony. Seduction seldom or ever enters a man's head when there is the possibility of his being compelled, either through cowardice or some other motive, to make a compensation by the sacrifice of his liberty. Should such an idea be engendered in the mind of any man, the moment he begins to act upon it, a multitude of mammas, aunts, and fathers, with brothers and cousins in the background, flock around him to demand his intentions. A young girl is therefore sure to be put upon her guard; and is secure, because her lover must make his approaches through a

chevaux-de-frize of relations, and accompany every sigh and sonnet with a proposal and a settlement.

If such a circumstance as the seduction of an unmarried lady occurs in society, she is generally the victim of some married libertine, who has commenced his insidious attacks by exciting her pity at the uncongeniality between himself and his wife; by teaching his victim this, through the medium of silent complaints, he first incites her to find an apology for his want of conjugal love; she then ceases to wonder that he has fixed his affections upon her, and at last confers her own upon him.

Your unfettered libertine never pays an attention where its object may be mistaken; and he has in general such a horror of matrimony, that he strangles every passion in its birth, that may by any remote chance lead to such a result.

Marriage thus, in the modern state of society, lays a woman open to a thousand more scenes and temptations than her maidenhood can possibly present; and consequently, the greatest and most interesting portion of the history of her passions, her heart, and her affections, occurs after the formation of this *liaison*.

As to Agnes, the forgiveness of Lady Pomeroy had removed the only cloud that appeared to darken her felicity. Blessed with the husband of her choice, and conceiving that husband to be all that her young imagination had pictured to her that a husband ought to be, she felt herself the most blessed of human creatures; and with a heart so happy, that she scarcely knew how to contain it within any moderate bounds, she jumped into the carriage which was to convey them to Trevor Place, to which he had just succeeded, by the bequest which had arrived so opportunely to propitiate Lady Pomeroy.

The invitation to Fleming Hall had been thankfully declined; for when could two hearts in love, and in the full accomplishment of their wishes, think of the formulæ of settlements, or devote themselves to the dull drudgery of business.

Away therefore they went to Trevor Place; feeling themselves the whole world to each other, and that the eye or the presence of any third person would have, in some degree, marred their present felicity.

The weather was delightful; the sun shone, and the birds sang: all nature appeared in its holyday dress; but the sun had never shone so brightly—the birds had never sung so

sweetly—the beauties of nature had never appeared so beautiful to the eyes of Agnes as they did now. Her life appeared like the clear sky before her, without a cloud to darken its brightness: all nature seemed to harmonize with the buoyant feelings of her own heart; and it would have been difficult, under her present sensations, to have convinced her that there was such a thing as misery in the world.

Their journey was a mixture of endearments and projects for the future: a thousand delightful plans were proposed and discussed: the improvement of their estate—the happiness of their tenantry—the morning ramble—the noontide ride—the social evening—the uninterrupted enjoyment of each other's society—were mingled with a hundred projects of doing good to their fellow-creatures—of increasing their own happiness, by adding to that of others. Perhaps there is no state of feeling that engenders virtuous sentiments so much as that of perfect happiness, derived from the accomplishment of an object with which no unworthy motive has been mingled. In their anticipations it was agreed, that when conversation or action gave place to quietude, that they should each pursue their favourite studies—that he should search through all his literary stores to find fresh food for intellectual enjoyment, and she cultivate her music and dancing to enliven the hours of their solitude. In short, every sentiment uttered by the one, seemed only the echo to the feelings of the other; and they went on and on thus delightfully dreaming till the close of the second day brought them within sight of their journey's end.

It was a beautiful evening, towards the end of autumn, when they arrived on the summit of a high hill, which commanded a complete view of the country for many miles round; and among other well remembered objects, Trevor pointed out the hall of the ancestors of that branch of his family, to which he had thus suddenly become the heir. The chimneys of the mansion were only visible above the dark trees by which it was surrounded: a river gently glided through the domain, and swept its serpentine course quite through the country, sparkling in the last refulgent rays of the setting sun, which was now rapidly declining; glittering first on the windows of the farm-houses and villas with which the country was studded, then upon the gilded vanes of several village churches that here and there reared their humble spires amid clusters of thatched cottages; and lastly, throwing a parting

gleam upon the summit of the hill on which Trevor had ordered the drivers to stop for a few minutes, that he and Agnes might enjoy the beauty of the scenery.

As they descended into the valley, their animated conversation gradually subsided into deep silence: a sensation of pleasing melancholy mingled with their happiness: their clasped hands alone spoke their affection; and perhaps this state of feeling is a degree of happiness far superior to the greatest buoyancy of pleasure that can be enjoyed. A thousand boyish recollections connected with the place to which they were going were rapidly passing through Trevor's mind, as every tree, cottage, and spire, recalled some infant feat.

Agnes began to feel that she was going to take the first possession of her husband's house as its mistress; and a deep feeling of her responsibilities mingled with her happiness.

It was now twilight; and they were descending rapidly, when from a small rising ground by the side of the road, their horses were startled by the sudden explosion of a rocket, which rushing into the air melted into a thousand minute particles of light, which mingled with and illumined the growing darkness of the atmosphere.

This was the signal agreed on by the villagers to hail the approach of their new landlord. The distant sound of bells, mingling with the uproarious huzza of the tenantry, immediately struck on the ears of Trevor and Agnes; and as the carriage swept round a sudden turning in the road, they saw the distant flames and curling smoke of a large bonfire, which the humbler tenantry had prepared to celebrate his arrival; and were almost immediately surrounded by a cavalcade of the superior farmers on the estate, who had come thus far to escort him to the Hall.

The glasses of the carriage were immediately lowered: the hands of Trevor and Agnes were clasped in the rough grasp of many a rude son of agriculture, who huzzaed a welcome to their estate. They passed under the archway of the lodge, and proceeded through a magnificent avenue of elms to the doors of the mansion: here waited the humbler tenantry to offer their greeting.

The hearts of Trevor and Agnes were full; and their kindness to each individual, as they were respectively named to them, in a minute won the affections of their tenants.

Orders were given that they should be regaled with the best the Hall afforded: butts of strong beer were tapped: they

drank the health of their new landlord and his lady, with one simultaneous cheer that made the roof of the old hall ring again; and retired to finish the evening at the different inns in the village, to which orders were immediately conveyed by the steward, that tables and provision should be prepared at Trevor's expense.

With difficulty Trevor and Agnes at last made their retreat from the pressing welcomes with which they were greeted; and when at length they succeeded, and finding themselves alone in the drawing-room, Trevor, in a faltering voice, himself welcomed her with a warm embrace to a mansion of his own, and gloried in calling it "*her* home, the home of his beloved, his adored Agnes." Unable any longer to control her feelings, she burst into a flood of tears, and threw herself upon the bosom of her husband. Trevor himself was far from being unmoved, though he blushed to feel that the fulness of his own eyes threatened to mingle his tears with those of his wife.

But those are delicious tears which arise from the excess of happiness—from the overflowings of a full heart, which has no other vent for the expression of its delight. How different from those of regret, passion, or remorse! How different from those which grief sends to dim the eye and plough their furrows on the cheeks over which they flow! But, alas! how few occasions are there in this life for such tears as those which were now shed by Agnes!

The next morning rose brightly, and saw Trevor and Agnes making the round of their estate, becoming acquainted with their tenants and their families: and here we must leave them, attempting to realize all the anticipations indulged in their journey, while we take a cursory view of the events at Fleming Hall.

There could scarcely be two beings with minds and hearts more dissimilar than those of Henry Pomeroy and Amelia Fleming.

A slave to the influence of her beauty, he loved her passionately—madly; and it was with a feeling almost allied to frenzy that sometimes after one of the most vehement effusions of his passion, in which he would picture all his warm feelings, all his sanguine anticipations, that he would hear her coldly refer to her aunt's opinion as to the propriety of his sentiments.

Sometimes, with all the eloquence of love, he would ad-

dress her for hours together, but obtain little else than placid smiles, cold affirmations, and silent consents: still hoping that time, attention, and the warmth of his passion, would at length kindle her into something less statue-like: convinced that she cared for no one else—and hoping that the coldness of the maid would not be carried into the character of the bride—he permitted the preparations for their marriage to proceed. But to be thus at one time warmed into passion by the contemplation of her beauty, and at another chilled into ice by the freezing temperature of her disposition, Henry Pomeroy, though in the full certainty of the possession of his mistress, was far from being a happy lover.

All the preparations for the nuptials of this couple, of course, proceeded perfectly, according to the rules of etiquette. Settlements were drawn up—parchments engrossed—jointure and pin-money discussed—and all the "attorneyship" of matrimony most punctiliously preserved, to the no small annoyance of the impatient Henry.

These were, however, not the only trials of his patience that he was destined to undergo. For when the settlements were completed, a new wardrobe was to be furnished; and the choice of silks, satins, laces, and sarsnets, occupied quite as much, if not more time than the engrossment of parchments. But Lady Pomeroy was determined that every thing should proceed according to her favourite term *en regle*: and Amelia had no other idea than that of following her aunt's instructions, and of never travelling one single hair's-breadth out of the straight path which fashion and propriety had prescribed.

At length, however, a distant day was fixed—the guests were invited—the bishop of the diocess agreed to perform the ceremony. The bridegroom was as impatient as his patient mother would permit him to be: Amelia was as beautiful, and cold, and lady-like, as ever. The day came—they were united in the presence of a numerous and select assembly at Fleming Hall, partook of an elegant collation, and set off in a post-chariot and four, accompanied by the two bride's maids to a seat which had been settled upon Amelia by her father's will. Their journey was however so different from that of Trevor and Agnes, that we are almost ashamed to say, that Henry found the presence of the bride's-maids a relief.

The honey-moon of this couple passed, as it might be sup-

posed to pass, where all was passion and rapture on one side, and cold propriety on the other. Ice and fire were not more opposite than the dispositions of Henry and Amelia, though all the fire of the one could not melt the ice of the other.

In the midst of his most passionate delight her chilling punctilio would throw his feelings back upon his heart in an agony, to find that the cold mistress had only become the passionless bride—and that all that she knew—all that she practised—all that she felt—never extended beyond the proprieties of life. His raptures were returned by allusions to ceremony and etiquette. His feelings repressed by punctilious attentions to set forms. Henry gloried that the beauty of his wife equalled that of a Venus of Canova; but he had not anticipated that the likeness would have extended to the marble from which it was sculptured.

CHAPTER XX.

TOWN AND COUNRTY.

Pleasure grows languid by restraint.
'Tis nature's privilege to roam.
FENTON.

In the mean time, Trevor and Agnes had almost realized their sanguine anticipations during the first month of their marriage. The morning ramble—the social evening—produced the pleasures they had expected from them, and Agnes was still in the plenitude of their enjoyment, wishing for no change, her heart full of happiness; blessed, and trying to bless; but Trevor soon—very soon began to feel the want of that excitement upon which alone he existed. The calm and quiet enjoyment of his wife's society, which immediately succeeded the first rapturous possession of her beauty, was not at all calculated to keep alive the mind and the affections and the passions of such a man as Trevor. He missed the necessity for plotting and planning, which had kept him so

continually occupied during his probation as a lover: a perpetual round of the quiet enjoyments, the placid pleasures with a wife, which characterized his present existence, proved to him but a poor compensation for days of restless impatience, succeeded by one hour of rapturous intercourse enjoyed by stealth with his mistress. He began also to be astonished at discovering how much the idea of opposing and tormenting Lady Pomeroy had added to the pleasure he had felt in his interviews with Agnes.

With such feelings as these, the endless succession of morning rambles, noontide rides, and *tête-à-tête* evenings, soon became insipid. Agnes was still as beautiful, her society as delightful, her wit as buoyant, her conversation as brilliant, and her music as sweet as ever; but they were his. He had a right to their possession; he enjoyed them without exertion, and they lost half their value in his opinion.

Ashamed, however, to appear thus vacillating in the eyes of a woman he admired and respected as he did Agnes, he still kept on in their usual routine, though it was with much the same difficulty as a man feels to keep his eyes open when he is almost irresistibly overpowered with the inclination to sleep. It was in vain, however, that he determined to enjoy himself as usual; the incipient yawn would intrude itself in the midst of his quiet pleasures; the hunting notices were eagerly looked after; the necessity for intercourse with the surrounding gentry was gradually discovered; and the morning ramble was frequently exchanged for a gallop after the fox-hounds; and the quiet evening sometimes broken in upon by the hunting companions Trevor brought home to dinner, or by the necessity for their attendance at some party in the neighbourhood.

Agnes sighed at Trevor's discovery of these necessities, which he swore were quite as annoying to him as they were to her. "But then, my love," he would say, "one must do as other people do;" and, "one must look after one's interest in the county;" and, "one cannot cut one's neighbours," &c. &c. In short, Trevor was seldom at a loss for some excuse to break in upon the tenor of a life which was, we are ashamed to confess it, beginning to be almost a bore to him.

Some of his fox-hunting companions too had quizzed him for having been tied so long to his wife's apron-string; and this put him on the determination to prove that they were

wrong. Others again spoke in raptures of the accomplishments and beauties of his wife; and this gratified his vanity, and made him wish to see her more in society.

Still, however, he would occasionally return to that life from which they had both anticipated so much pleasure, and from which Agnes still derived her principal delight. But we are bound to confess that this was generally during a hard frost, when the scent would not lay; and a fine hunting morning generally interrupted this return to domesticity. A series of frost, however, soon precluded the possibility of hunting altogether; and he was obliged perforce to derive many of his enjoyments from his wife's presence and conversation. This was a little helped at first by an attempt which he made to teach her to skate on the lake in the park, which was now frozen over. But they could not skate after dark, and there was still the long evening to be passed with no other variety than her ever-varying sources of entertainment. But possession seemed to have dulled his powers of discrimination. Agnes, the ever-playful, ever-varying Agnes in every thing except her affections, appeared to him all sameness; and the crude, dull, dry dissertations in a newspaper were frequently preferred to the sweetness of her music and the brilliancy of her conversation.

The perusal of the newspaper brought London and all its pursuits to his mind; he began to wonder what such and such people were doing, who was winning and who losing, what the odds were on the next St. Leger; and who would be the leading women of *ton* the next season. In the discussion of these subjects he would become animated, and would entertain Agnes with a hundred projects, which he talked of having once formed, but which of course were given up, now that he had become a married man. Unwilling to believe what she dreaded to find true, Agnes would still tempt him among his tenantry; still exert her powers of pleasing; and still play all that had ever been his favourite tunes. But all in vain. It became at length impossible for her any longer to doubt, that Trevor tired of the solitude and inaction to which he was condemned in the country. He slept away half the morning on the sofa; was absent when she spoke to him; and no longer launched out in praises of the beautiful scenery which had given such a zest to their rides.

Their *tête-à-tête* dinners became silent. Bumper after bumper could scarcely keep him awake; and he half yawned

even when the beautiful hand of Agnes was sweeping the strings of her harp, and her voice chanting the melodies in which he had hitherto found so much delight.

He began to fancy that the air grew cold and bleak ; voted his country neighbours a bore ; talked of the opera and his clubs, and wondered what all the world were doing in town. He gave two or three hints about business and his banker ; inquired frequently if Agnes did not long to see her sister and Lady Pomeroy ; wondered whether they did not wish for their presence in town ; and in short, to use a vulgar phrase, "beat about the bush" till Agnes too plainly perceived his drift. He was ashamed so soon openly to confess that all his enthusiasm for solitude and the country had so hastily vanished. His encomiums upon green trees, autumnal tints, delicious rambles, and domestic *tête-à-têtes*, were too recent for him to disavow them. He thought this would be too fickle even for him. But Agnes, with the keen eye of love, read it in his listless glance ; understood it in his faint praise of that which, a little month since, had called forth enthusiastic admiration ; and felt it in the absence of all that pleasure which used to be so apparent during the first weeks of their union.

She sighed to think it was so ; but her affection found a thousand excuses for her husband in the activity and excitement of his former life. She gave up her expectations of enjoying life with him alone, and of keeping all his society to herself, and even began to think she had been unjust and selfish in ever having entertained them.

In her own inclination for the continuance of the life they had been leading, she forgot that it was his own protestations that had led her to imagine that it was to continue ; or if she did now and then sigh over the recollection that he had made them, and breathe a wish that he had acted up to them, she repressed her sighs and her wishes within her own breast, and determined to do every thing that could contribute to her husband's pleasure.

Influenced by this determination, she entered the library with the intention of proposing a journey to town, and was thinking how she could prevent his suspicion of the real cause of her proposal, when he met her at the door with an open letter in his hand,—

"Oh, my sweet Agnes," exclaimed he, "the most unlucky *contretemps* in the world. These men of business, they

never will let one enjoy a peaceful hour in the country; they have no idea of the pleasures of solitude. Would you believe it, my love! this letter is a mandate from my lawyer. It says that the title to the Dorsetshire estate requires immediate and personal attention, and it is of so much importance, that I fear—" Agnes smiled—"yes indeed, love, I fear that I must tear myself away from these peaceful scenes—" Agnes smiled again—"where we have enjoyed so much happiness—"

"And of which you were beginning to be so much tired," interrupted Agnes. "Nay, nay, my Trevor, don't deny it," said she, putting her hand playfully on his lips, "it is but natural that a mind like yours should again wish for its usual activity; again wish for the pursuits which habit has rendered second nature."

Trevor protested her society was all that he wished on earth; that her conversation was sufficient; her music the only sweet sounds he wished to hear. But Agnes again stopped him by exclaiming, "Oh, yes! all this is prettily spoken; but confess now, Charles, don't you think you will enjoy my society better, and appreciate my music more justly, had you the opportunity of comparing it with that of others?"

She looked archly as she spoke, and Trevor's consciousness suffused his brow and cheek with that slight glow of confusion, which in a woman would have been dignified with the title of a blush.

A good-natured shake of the head, an affectionate kiss, and a playful exclamation of "naughty boy," set the whole matter to rights with him; and from this moment every preparation was made to quit that place, in which a few short weeks since he had almost sworn that he could pass his life; that place, within whose limits he had protested were contained all that he wished on this side of the grave; all that he had sworn was fame, fortune, and happiness to him.

The valet and lady's-maid were summoned to receive the orders for departure with pleasure, and they obeyed them with alacrity; for they were also tired of the monotony of the country, and were beginning to think of the parson and the parish church by the way of making the time pass away a little more pleasantly: for valets and waiting-maids have the same inclinations with their masters and mistresses; and green trees, and evening walks, and larks and nightingales

had begun to have their effect upon Watkins and Flounce, as well as upon their betters; when the ideas of a London second table, and the anticipation of meeting the whole tribe of London servants, gentlemen's gentlemen and ladies' waiting gentlewomen in the steward's room in town, with all the *et-cetera* of French wines and whist, and the scandalous chronicles of their masters and mistresses deeds and misdeeds put all their other thoughts to flight, and buried them in the portmanteaux and trunks with which they were now occupied.

The imperial-crowned carriage was at length at the hall door. Comfortable cloaks were spread over the rumble-tumble, to protect the persons of Watkins and another man-servant. Flounce, with another female-servant occupied a travelling chariot behind; dickies and rumble-tumbles having been excepted in the articles of her engagement.

Post-horses had been ordered from the first stage by the avant courier, who had written forward to bespeak relays.—Coffee was swallowed by Trevor; and in high spirits he gave his hand to Agnes, and placed her comfortably in the corner of the warm and well-appointed travelling-carriage: the rest of the household, with the exception of the old housekeeper, were to travel by other conveyances to London.

The signal was given; smack went the whips and off went the horses at a pace of twelve miles an hour; but not so fast as Trevor's imagination, which had already travelled to town, and was indulging in his clubs, his Opera-box, and his lounge up Bond Street. He had already, in fancy, shaken hands with a hundred of his old acquaintance, who congratulated him on his re-appearance in the world.

Agnes, on the contrary, as the carriage whirled rapidly through the avenue of elms which had so impressed her on her first arrival, and as particular spots met her view, looked upon them with a deep feeling of regret, at parting from scenes which had been the witnesses of what she then deemed the happiest moments of her life. It was amidst them that she had first given way to the impulses of youthful affection. It was there that she had first seen the happiness of the husband beam in the face of her lover.

Every spot was endeared by some tender recollection, and was thus rendered sacred to her memory.

The journey was thus shortened to them both by the thoughts in which they indulged. Hers were all of the past; his, all of the future. She lived upon memory; he upon anticipation.

Alas! at what an early period of their union for such an affectionate mind and heart as that of Agnes, to find its best and dearest pleasures in the past instead of the future.

Yet were we to analyze the minds of nine-tenths of the husbands and wives in the world, I am afraid this would be found to be the case within three months after their marriage.

About the end of the second day, they entered London just as the gas was illuminating the streets and bridges.—Trevor hailed with delight the sight of the crowded and bustling streets; stretched out his neck as the carriage rolled by the club-houses, and exhibited all the signs of returning animation; for he had really begun to feel as though the vital functions of his existence had been suspended during his short vegetation in the country; and as they dashed out of Piccadilly into Park Lane, in which a house had been taken for them, he inwardly confessed that not all the magnificent scenery of Trevor Park, with its superb avenues, romantic cliffs, and ocean view, could compete with the three or four acres of lilacs and evergreens with which a London square was planted.

Not so Agnes. As the carriage entered London, and the busy bustling world struck again her view, she felt as though she had been suddenly awakened from some delicious dream, and that some demon whispered to her spirit—

Awake! awake! and dream no more.

The thundering knock which announced the arrival of the carriage at their own door, seemed the knell to the quiet pleasures she had promised herself; and it was in vain that during dinner she tried to rally her spirits, so as in some measure to keep pace with those of Trevor, which were animated by every distant knock, and by every sound that told him he was in dear dear London.

As soon as dinner was over, he became fidgetty and nervous; he moved about the room with impatience; and as Agnes arose to quit the dining room, he said, he thought he should just take a turn to the club, and join her in the dressing room.

Agnes herself spent the evening in solitude: she had an indefinable presentiment of evil, which she could not overcome; and as she heard the door close upon Trevor, and listened to

the rattling of his carriage wheels as they bore him from the house, her heart felt a void for which she could scarcely account. Her only *appui* seemed to have left her. Her greatest hope seemed to be failing her; and she unwillingly began to dread that the many romantic wishes she had indulged were doomed to meet with nothing but disappointment.

She hurried, however, away from this thought, and sought relief in that never-failing resource to a feeling mind that has no positive grief to indulge in—music. She tried the harp, then the piano; from the piano she turned to her guitar; still all seemed discord. Her mind was out of tune. Sometimes, as a carriage approached, she would for a moment indulge in the hope that Trevor was returning; but as it passed, this hope died away; and the idea came to her mind, that after so long an absence from his usual pursuits and his old companions, it was but natural that they should detain him late this first night of his return. So apt is an affectionate heart to find excuses for the conduct of those it loves; so loth is it to admit a doubt as to the affections, upon the continuance of which it has placed its sole hopes of happiness.

Hour after hour rolled on. But still no Trevor: till at length really alarmed at his protracted absence, she was on the point of sending his man to learn at what time he had ordered the carriage, when his knock at the door and his immediate presence quieted her fears for his safety; and a kiss of welcome, and a candid acknowledgment that his return to his club having been quite *féted* by his friends had caused his delay, procured a pardon for the first solitary evening he had yet made her pass.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN ARRIVAL.

'Tis I who Love's Columbus am; 'tis I
Who must new worlds in it descry;
Rich worlds that yield a treasure more
Than all that has been known before.
COWLEY.

Were you, ye fair, but cautious whom ye trust,
So many of your sex would not in vain,
Of broken vows and faithless men complain.
ROWE.

THE next morning's breakfast-table conversation was filled by Trevor with projects of society and schemes for gayety. He insisted that Agnes should immediately fix on her nights for quadrilles, concerts, and assemblies, during the season. The visiting-list was called for and augmented; and the major-domo ordered to send out innumerable tickets in every direction to which the fashionable world extended, till poor Agnes was absolutely bewildered with the engagements and gayeties in prospect; and looked through the long perspective of the season in vain for one evening of that domestic quiet, the anticipation of which, a few weeks since, had formed their whole hopes of happiness.

At length she ventured to stop the buoyancy of Trevor's spirits, by a gentle allusion to the impossibility of any thing like domestic comfort in the vortex of such arrangements as he proposed; and to express her fears that in the midst of such general society, she should have very little, if any, time for the enjoyment of his own.

"Oh, my love," said Trevor, "*ça viendra* with the country in its proper time and season. Here one must do as others do, if we do not wish to be quizzed and laughed at. Yours, my love, are talents that are formed to create the admiration and envy of the world. I already, 'in my mind's

eye,' see the men overpowered by the one, and the women dying of the other."

"As to my talents, Charles, I value them only as they seem to amuse you. I want no other admiration than yours. A glance of approbation from your eyes would be dearer to me than the plaudits of the whole world; and as to envy, I have no ambition to excite it."

"But then you know, my love, that as the Honourable Mrs. Trevor, who may be a Countess, you have a certain station in society to keep up, which—which—" and he hesitated; for he was really at a loss to find an excuse for the long series of dissipation which he had enumerated.

"I know I have, Charles," said Agnes, affectionately; "and, believe me, I shall never forget it: but in keeping up this station in society, do not make me lament that I am so seldom to be Mrs. Trevor for yourself alone. For it was you, and not your station, that made me so; and I declare to you, that should the title, which seems all at once to have such charms in your eyes, ever become yours, I should regret being addressed by any other name than that of Mrs. Trevor."

"Thanks, thanks, my love, for your affection. It is gratifying, believe me—gratifying to my heart, and I feel your kindness to my soul; and so, as I was saying, the Marquis of Townly says you will receive cards from the Marchioness—for the 10th and 24th of February, the 12th and 30th of March, and for six assemblies, distributed through May, June, and July."

A long list of other prospective engagements of the same nature were then enumerated. Boxes at the Opera and French play were to be secured. Her name was to be proposed at Almack's; till by the time that Lady Emily Trevor was announced, who came to hear of the realization of all the romantic dreams of domestic happiness, in which her friend and sister had indulged, poor Agnes could hardly recollect that there were such words in the vocabulary; so completely had the whirl of gayety in which Trevor talked of living, banished them from her remembrance. All that Agnes could do was to assent in silence: though her heart felt acutely that in all these arrangements, the dear thought of domesticity, upon which she had placed so many of her hopes of happiness, seemed to have been entirely forgotten.

Trevor took the opportunity of Lady Emily's arrival to start on his morning's round. Bidding his sister a welcome and a good-bye in the same kiss, with an "*au revoir mon amie*" to his wife, he quitted the room: leaving his friends to that delicious intercourse which the mutual narration of events which have occurred during a short separation, between persons who love each other, always produces.

All the letters of Agnes had glowed with the description of the happiness she was enjoying at Trevor Hall. They spoke the full accomplishment of her dearest wishes—the realization of her most sanguine expectations. Even the letter announcing this sudden change of their determination to pass the whole year in the country, had not even hinted that it was not the perfect wish of her own heart, as well as that of Trevor.

In repeating the pleasures and pursuits of their short sojourn in the country, Agnes again became animated; but Lady Emily thought that she heard a sigh mingle with these descriptions; and Agnes did really experience that feeling of melancholy which pervades the mind and heart, when alluding to those pleasures which are passed away, instead of those which are to come.

Agnes was, however, too generous to give a hint of this incipient feeling to her friend; and anxious to hear how she went on with Hartley, she turned the conversation upon him.

"Oh," said Lady Emily, "the creature is just the same teazing mortal he ever was. Where I am, there the man is sure to be with that perpetually grave face, frowning at all my little flirtations and gayeties. I have dismissed him a hundred times by hints and inuendoes; but I might as well, and as wisely, throw snow against a stone wall, as hints at a man that will not understand them."

"He stands his ground though, I perceive," said Agnes, "in spite of all the fine gentlemen by whom you are surrounded and addressed."

"Why, yes, he does that certainly; but it is with much the same air that a two-and-twenty pounder would maintain its station against batteries of pop-guns, or an English mastiff against a bevy of lap-dogs. My other beaux let fly their light arrows in all directions: they dazzle my eyes in their flight; whirl round my head, but reach no further. But Hartley

stands like a well-trained engineer: he reserves his fire for great occasions, and comes upon me with some cannon ball of a virtue, that—that—that—"

"Goes home to the heart, I presume you mean," said Agnes, finishing the sentence for her friend.

"No, not exactly so, neither," said Lady Emily. "Reason is but a rough road to the heart. Though I begin to believe, that if once that path is discovered, it is the surest way to win it irrevocably. The man who wins a woman's heart through the eye or the ear alone, though he may make a more rapid progress at first, is not half so secure of its possession as he who reaches it through the medium of her judgment and her understanding."

"Spoken with the true wisdom of my friend and monitress Emily," exclaimed Agnes; "you are indeed all dull reality, without the slightest portion of sentiment and romance in your composition. Now, I—I am all the contrary;" and a sigh, so gentle that she scarcely felt it herself, stole from her bosom, as imagination recurred to that indefinable fear which is the first effect of some dreaded disappointment.

"Oh! you are quite mistaken, my dear Agnes, in your estimate of my disposition. I am naturally as ardent and romantic as yourself; and confess to you that there are many men by whom I have been addressed, who much more resemble my *beau ideal* of a lover, than poor Hartley. But a husband, Agnes, is for every-day wear, and not to be put on upon holydays alone, to glitter for a moment, and be laid by in one's wardrobe till one wants to be brilliant again. A husband is for home consumption, and not for parade abroad. In short, a lover is what wit, and a husband what common sense is to us. The one may amuse us for a moment, but the other is of use to us all our lives."

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Pomeroy now came in to pay their congratulations to Agnes. They had flown to town with eagerness from the comparative solitude of the country, the very moment the etiquette honey-moon of their marriage was passed. Amelia tired of the country, Henry maddened by her continued coldness.

Amelia was still as beautiful as ever, and still as cold and ceremonious. Marriage had made no difference in her, except the speedy adoption of the privilege of a matron to *chaperon* others, and to take precedence of single ladies.

Henry appeared pale, though a hectic flush would now and

then cross his forehead and cheeks. His features looked as though he were consuming by some inward fire, which was confined to his own breast, and whose flames were driven back by some chilling influence the moment they attempted to break forth. Altogether, his appearance would not have been an unapt illustration of that lover who is said to have died of his passion for a statue.

After the meeting of the sisters, conversation took a general turn: the opera and the singers—people of fashion and their parties—were freely canvassed; and Agnes soon found herself involved in a round of engagements, which Amelia declared she could not avoid if she intended to live according to her aunt's idea *en règle*.

Lady Pomeroy's entrance and subsequent conversation did not at all diminish these engagements. She exclaimed, after any party had been named, "Oh! of course you must go there;" and, "Oh! everybody will be there:" and, "You must not be out of that for the world;" with such-like all-powerful reasons. At Trevor's return, all these reasons were confirmed by his wishes, and Agnes, for the present, at any rate, was obliged to give up her own ideas and anticipations of domestic happiness: and she felt herself soon compelled to acknowledge that—

> The glittering dreams which pass before the mind,
> Are not by Heaven for prophecies designed,
> Nor by ethereal beings sent us down,
> But each one is creator of his own.

The common course of things, under these circumstances, led Agnes into a round of society, in which her rank, her talents, and her fortune, gave her a prominent situation. Trevor's invitations were as indiscriminate as they were numerous, and her table was daily therefore covered with visiting tickets, and few people of fashion came to town, whose cards were not immediately despatched to the Trevors, among the "dear five hundred friends" who were to help kill their time and fill their saloons during the winter, or rather during the season.

Though Trevor's inconstancy of disposition might have taken away from the first fervour of his passion, his vanity was yet gratified by the admiration which his wife everywhere excited; and as this gratification was of course increased the more she was in society, he urged her into a series of dissi-

pation, entirely contrary to her own inclination and judgment.

It is not, however, in the nature of a young heart not to derive pleasure from perceiving that it has the power of communicating it; and Agnes found so much talent to patronise, and so many other outlets for the generous feelings of her nature in society, that in time she became reconciled to it, though her heart turned with regret to all her early anticipations of domestic comfort; but to them she still looked forward, when the close of the season and fashion should again take them back to the seat of Trevor's ancestors, which she had so recently quitted with so much regret. She was now, however, in the giddy whirl of fashion; and its pursuit left no time for regrets of any sort. Party followed party, and engagement succeeded engagement so quickly, that her time was perpetually occupied, either in recovering from the fatigues of one or preparing for the gayeties of another.

For some days the "world of fashion" had been busy in anticipating the first splendid assembly of the Marchioness of Townley, whose cards had been issued for the opening of her mansion, with the new suite of rooms built by Nash, and furnished by Orchard.

The town was full; and nobody who had the least pretensions to knock at her doors, had omitted leaving their tickets, that their names might not be left out in the distribution of her cards. At the Opera, for two or three nights preceding her assembly, the Marchioness was actually besieged by the presentation of all the new pretenders to fashion, which coming of age, to a fortune, or to any kind of notoriety, had created. But she was a veteran, and had stood all these things these forty years, without having ever complained of fatigue; and she had been known to keep her enamel and her rouge intact for weeks together, when the height of the season and its occupations left her no time to make a new face.

This season, the wife of a great financier having opened a mansion in her own square, with the professed intention of rivalling her parties at home as well as her influence at Almack's, had infused into the aged Marchioness more spirit and and more extravagance than usual; and she determined to overpower the audacious attempt, and show the difference between the legitimate aristocracy of birth, and the plebeian attempts of a *parvenue*. For her ensuing entertainment, therefore,

Gunter was ordered to do his "*possible*," every preparation was made to render it the most splendid thing of the season, and guests of a certain rank were canvassed with as much avidity to grace her saloon on the evening in question, as the Marchioness was herself canvassed by guests of inferior rank for her permission to be with the crowd, and see their names the next morning among the Misters and Mistresses who had filled her rooms.

At length the night arrived; and carriage after carriage set down their superbly dressed inmates at the door of the Marchioness. The names of these visiters echoed up the spacious staircase, repeated by a dozen different lackeys. The Marchioness herself sat on a damask satin sofa in the first anti-room to receive her guests, and smiled with self-satisfaction, as title after title was roared out by the servants; and more particularly as she was pretty sure that her rich rival lived almost within ear-shot of the high-sounding names that reverberated through her hall and staircase.

At length the company had nearly all arrived. The Marchioness had breathing time between the announcements—to receive the congratulations of her visiters on the splendour of her new apartments and furniture, and on the elegance of her assembly; congratulations, which, from many a female tongue, were uttered with all the bitterness of gall in their hearts, and all the sweetness of honey in their words.

Agnes had arrived early with her friend and sister-in-law Lady Emily, and had as usual drawn round her a conversational circle, which was generally the resort of those who were considered among the literati and the wits of the day. In this circle she was the presiding genius, and though badinage was the order of the moment, but little scandal and less ill-nature could find their way into a conversation which was led by Agnes. It might almost be said, that the little circle over which she presided, had the same precious privilege as that attributed to Ireland, and that no venomous reptile could exist within its precincts. It was to this circle that the dramatist, the artist, and the poet, resorted, with the certainty of attention to their talents and opportunity for their exertion; and though many an exclusive, as she passed by, would cast a disdainful look at the coterie of Agnes Trevor, because the aristocracy of talent was there acknowledged as well as the aristocracy of rank, there were none who more thoroughly enjoyed society than she did. She was indeed

the very essence of enjoyment herself, and doubled her own pleasure by communicating it to those around her. In a circle of this sort too, where so many lived in imagination, she often found her own romantic turn reflected in others; and this would often draw her from the contemplation of the mere dull realities of life, which she began to feel were very far from being those which she had anticipated.

Quadrilles and *ecarté*-tables were now forming in different apartments. Elderly ladies cut for partners at whist, and young ladies fanned for them in quadrilles. The business of the evening, *id est*, flirtation among the young, a little more than flirtation among the middle-aged, and gambling among the seniors, commenced. Challoner in one apartment and Weippart in another, played waltzes and quadrilles alternately, and the whole world seemed occupied and in motion, excepting those persons denominated wall flowers, who sat round the different apartments motionless, looking like the gilded frame of an animated picture, or resembling the spectators at a cosmorama.

The noise of the carriages had been stilled some time, and the deep oaths of the coachmen had subsided into the silence which betokened the presence of the porter-pots, when the sudden rattle of wheels evidently rotatorying at a most furious rate was heard in the square; and so conspicuous and overwhelming was the noise they made, that the Babel-like conversation of the crowded rooms, and the shrill harmonicon of Challoner, were nearly drowned in the approach of the vehicle to the house.

In a moment all the carriages in the square seemed to be set in motion—and with them the tongues of their drivers. The newly arrived equipage appeared to have charged full gallop into the phalanx of chariots, coaches, *vis-a-vis*, and cabriolets, surrounding the door of the Marchioness. Nothing was heard for a few moments but the slashing of whips, the trampling of horses, and the oaths of the coachmen. All seemed confusion worse confounded—a confusion which was explained by some who had taken a refuge from the heat of the apartments, and perhaps from the observation of their occupiers in the balcony, stating that it was created by the sudden arrival of a bretchka, with four foaming horses, which was that moment discharging its tenant at the door.

In a minute after, the name of Sir Robert Leslie was bawled out by the porter in the hall. "Sir Robert Leslie,"

repeated the servant on the first landing—and "Sir Robert Leslie," re-echoed the fellow at the door of the anti-room.

Almost every one who heard the name, repeated it with exclamations of surprise.—"Where did he come from?"—"When did he arrive?"—"How long has he been in England?" were questions that each asked of the other, without expecting or receiving any answer. A few wondered at his again venturing into English society. Men who cared for their wives and daughters, felt a slight impression of uneasiness in their minds as the name met their ears; and the cheeks of many a lady from twenty-five to thirty-five, tingled with a conscious blush at the announcement of a name which they had too much reason to remember.

Wonders as to his reception were beginning to creep into some of their minds. No time, however, was given for debate upon this point; for the name was scarcely uttered by the last animated repeater of the Marchioness, before Sir Robert Leslie had bowed upon her hand—received her mechanical welcome—and passed into the inner apartments nodding, bowing, shaking hands, smiling away frowns, or frowning down appearances of anger, to the indignation of some, the amusement of others, and the astonishment of all.

Sir Robert Leslie was precisely in person, what the French would call *un bel homme*. He was rather above the middle height, perfectly well made, with a countenance, the principal attraction of which was its openness—an openness, however, which, on certain occasions, degenerated into an expression of daring recklessness, which spoke very plainly that fearlessness of consequences which was one of his principal characteristics. In his manners he was perfectly easy and familiar with every body, without ever being obtrusive. In his dress there was nothing conspicuous, and yet there was that about it which made every body attempt an imitation, and attempt it unsuccessfully. The secret was, that his dress was precisely that which suited his person. No French *femme de chambre* ever studied the mysteries of the toilet with more perseverance than the valet of Sir Robert Leslie did that of his master; and yet no person's dress ever appeared more easy and unstudied than his. Indeed, the art of his servant was to throw a kind of careless *recherché* character into his costume, which gave him an air of *parfaitement distingué des autres*, and yet without the slightest affectation of singularity. There was likewise a *degagé* cha-

racter about his dress which helped, if I may so term it, the openness of his countenance.

If his demeanour could be called any thing, it was modest —without diffidence—and formed a remarkable contrast to the character which he so justly bore in the world. It was this which surprised every body, and threw every body off their guard. At a first introduction, and without some positive knowledge of facts, nobody, from his quiet unobtrusive manner, his sterling good sense on the subjects on which he conversed, the innocent play of his imagination, and the correct tenor of his expressions and general conversation, could possibly conceive Leslie to be the gay, daring, reckless, and voluptuous libertine that he was. His intimate friend and associate, Frederick Villars, was wont to call him the "most impudent man alive, with the most modest demeanour in the world;" and often said, that he envied him more for this appearance of modesty, than for any other of the many high qualifications he possessed, and swore that the principal part of his *bonnes fortunes* with the fair, was more owing to this than to that dash and impudence to which they were too apt to be attributed.

From the period of the newspaper paragraphs, which the reader will recollect created so much discussion in Mrs. Dashington's establishment, when our hero figured away under the initials of Sir R—— L——e, and was designated by the names of the "gay Lothario," the "gallant Colonel," the "favoured lover," and all those other epithets with which newspaper morality chooses to decorate "adulterers," Sir Robert Leslie had resided, or rather travelled on the Continent. Little was known of him in England, excepting that his character for gallantry was quite as conspicuous in the circles of Paris, Rome, Florence, and Naples, as it had been in those of London. Rumour said, that he had been called several times to the field to answer for misdemeanours of the same nature; and it was known that in one instance he had absented himself from the more populous towns, and had been supposed to be residing with some beautiful recluse, in the seclusion of some Italian villa, near the Lago Maggiore.

All was, however, but rumour; nothing was certainly known of him, excepting by his friend Villars, who was his Pylades, his Pythias, his second self.

The same uncertainty attended the fate of the unfortunate

lady who had accompanied him from England. There were sad reports of desertion, of remorse, of repentance, and of death. Rumour had even hinted at self-destruction; but there was no certainty. She had thrown herself out of the pale of society. She had been too beautiful to be easily forgiven. Virtuous women could not sully their lips by inquiries after a frail fair one, who had outshone them; time buried her good and amiable qualities in oblivion, and left nothing but the memory of her frailty for the malice of her friends to descant upon. How differently in these cases is a woman situated from a man! He has a thousand pursuits; she, no *appui* but him, only him, for whom she has sacrificed every thing;—

> Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
> 'Tis woman's whole existence; man may range
> The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart,
> Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange;
> Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart;
> And few there are whom these cannot estrange:
> Men have all these resources—women *one*,
> To love again, and be again undone.

But amid all the reports which had gone forth on the broad pinions of rumour, that she had loved again, had never even been whispered. Malice therefore being silent on this point, she was supposed dead.

As the name of Sir Robert Leslie struck upon the ear of Agnes, it recalled to her memory the paragraphs, and the account of the duel which had at the time made so great an impression upon her mind; and her decided dislike of the character he bore, was not unmixed with curiosity to see a man of whom the world had said so much, and of whom this newspaper history had made her think a great deal, in spite of herself. She was not, however, so placed that she could see him at his entrance, and nobody pointed him out afterward. She and Lady Emily exchanged some of their school reminiscences on the subject, and it was dropped in the pursuit of the general conversation.

To the numerous inquiries of where he came from, Leslie said "From Florence," with precisely the same tone that he would have said from Berkeley Square. And to the further interrogatory of when did he arrive, he replied, with the same *sang froid*, that he was only that moment from Italy, and that seeing the lights and the carriages, the Marchioness's

door was the first at which he had alighted; he had not even been to his own house. With the silly multitude this had its effect, and Leslie calculated upon it; and as to the Marchioness, she imagined that a man of the calibre of Sir Robert Leslie having been actually set down at her party fresh from Florence, would give it *eclat*. This, in her eyes, was a sufficient atonement for all his misdeeds.

The Marchioness, therefore, patronised him; the world followed her example; and Sir Robert Leslie was again as firmly established in society, as though he had never violated the sacred ties of hospitality and friendship; as though he had never led any woman into error, and left her to destruction and despair.

There was one there though who met his salutation with a haughty eye; and whose heart seemed to swell with indignation as he approached the place where he stood. This was the lady's brother, who had called him out upon the occasion; and who felt that a mere shot of etiquette had not appeased his vengeance for the loss of a sister's virtue, or for a blemish upon the fair fame of an honourable family. But the ceremonials of society deemed that he must be satisfied; and he could only lament it in silence, and brood over his resentment in secret. Leslie, however, knew the opinion of the world was with him in the affair of the duel, and was careless how his salutation was received; though he was careful that it should show, that not a jot of resentment was harboured on his own part.

The buz of Leslie's entrance, and the wonders which his arrival created, had soon subsided; and the general conversation of the circle around Agnes was resumed. As usual, poetry was the subject they were discussing; and Agnes was encouraging an argument between a celebrated admirer and eulogiser of Shakspeare, and a French *petit maitre* attached to the French embassy, who was shrugging his shoulders at Hamlet, Macbeth, and Romeo and Juliet, and attempting to ridicule Shakspeare, while he trumpeted forth the praises of Racine and Corneille.

"Shakspeare, Sir," said the champion of our bard of Avon, "is a poet for all time; a poet who will live as long as the nature he has illustrated; and whose memory is to be annihilated by nothing but a universal deluge. He was one of those giants of literature, Sir, who stand prominent on the great canvass of the world; and who come only like comets,

at stated intervals, to surprise and dazzle mankind. To speak of Racine or Corneille, with their measured verses, in the same breath with Shakspeare, is sacrilege."

"C'est vrai, mon ami, je le conviens—mais. I assure you dat, your Monsieur Shakspeare, make no way in France, at all."

"Because you don't understand him; because you do not understand the language in which he wrote; and I acknowledge, that in many instances our national bard is untranslatable. Think, Mrs. Trevor, of the imposing apostrophe of the witches,—

When shall we three meet again,
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?—

being literally rendered thus, in the very best translation of Shakspeare:—

Quand nous rassemblerons-nous encore toutes trois?
Choisirons un jour de tonnerre, et d'é claire, ou un jour de pluie.

Compare this with the English, and you will find the introduction of the words 'Choisirons' and 'jour' takes away from all its poetic force. Condensation is the soul of poetry. Again, Macbeth's exclamation of 'Nay, never shake thy gory locks at me,' loses all its horror in the

Ne secoue point ainsi ta chevelure sanglante en me fixant

of the French."

"Eh bien! though we do not like Shakspeare in France," said the Frenchman, "yet we have robbed him of his coarseness. He is *bien plus gentil* in our language than his own."

"True," exclaimed a gentleman, who had for a moment listened to the previous conversation, and who had been attracted in passing by the apparent interest of Agnes; "and your observation cannot be more aptly illustrated, than by your translation of Macbeth; where, scorning to call such great men simply by their cognomens, your poet has made the spirit conjured up by the witches politely exclaim,

Monsieur Macbeth! Monsieur Macbeth! Monsieur Macbeth!
Prenez garde de Monsieur Macduff!"

Agnes' eyes were immediately turned in the direction of the speaker, whose gaze was rivetted upon her countenance; but immediately withdrawn the moment he perceived he had attracted her attention. The countenance and person were unknown to her, and seemed to be so to all the circle. His observation excited a smile at the expense of the Frenchman, who shrugged his shoulders, and again uttered a eulogism on his native authors, to which the stranger replied—

"There is certainly one thing in which your French tragedians eclipse ours, and that is in the politeness of their heroes, and the fashion of their heroines. Thus the Phedra, Hermione, Agrippina, and Clytemnestra, of Racine, are Parisian fine ladies in tight stays and bell hoops; while his heroes, whether Greek or Roman, are all Frenchmen, all *petit maitres*. They all speak poetry, certainly; but speak it much more to the ear than the heart; and they seem to dread a false quantity in their metre, more than the fate with which they are threatened in the tragedy."

"Eh bien, Monsieur; c'est mieux, to be too high and proud, than to be petit, little. Regardez votre Madame Macbeth; qui dans le moment qu'elle fait faire le meurtre d'un roi parle d'une souris, et d'une chouette—

I heard de owl scream, and de cricket cry.

Et après—'not a mouse stirring.' 'Tis good, dat she had de loisir de les écouter. Et son mari, Monsieur Macbeth, qui après avoir tué son roi, entretient sa femme avec la conversation de ses domestiques enivrés—Oh! c'est grotesque. c'est terrible, c'est ver bad.

"De one cry God bless us. Ainsi soit-il, a dit l'autre."

"But these images," replied the stranger, "of the owl and the cricket are associated in our country, and more particularly in Scotland, with superstitious dread. The one is the bird, the other the insect of evil omen; and it is thus that our Shakspeare showed that universal knowledge of nature, which has indeed made him the poet for all time, and for every age."

"Ah! ah!" continued the pertinacious Frenchman. "But

if Racine had written Macbeth, it would have been bien différent."

"No doubt, no doubt. He would have made Monsieur and Madame Macbeth rhyme it away through some score of fine verses. But the fact is, that Grimm has defined French tragedy truly, when he has compared Melpomene to a pupil receiving lessons in dancing from Racine and Corneille, who are the dancing-masters. 'Communément,' says he, speaking of the French tragedy, 'tout se passe en beaux dialogues bien agencés, bien ronflés, où l'on voit d'abord que le premier soin de chaque interlocuteur, est toujours celui de briller; puisque agités qu'ils puissent être, ils songent toujours plus au public qu'à euxmêmes.'"

"Eh bien! alors! ils sont les héros les plus désintéressés du monde; mais Grimm—il ne savait rien; et votre Shakspere, how could he write about de kings and queens; who kept company wid de *canaille*, and who knew nothing of courts, but the domestiques?"

"Shakspeare's court, Sir, was human nature. You wonder he could know how kings thought and felt. He dived into the heart of man; and the hearts of monarchs are human, subject to human passions, to human virtues, and to human frailties. By drawing all his illustrations from the heart, he spoke to its feelings, as well as to the imagination. Nature is the prolific source of the poet, and Shakspeare never swerved from her laws."

The stranger's eyes at this moment again encountered those of Agnes, which gave him a glance of approbation; and as he moved on and mingled with the crowd, she wondered who he was, and felt surprised that a man who was so evidently of the *elite* of society, should be unknown both to herself and Lady Emily, who had been equally amused with the few observations with which the stranger had put down the pertinacious Frenchman.

There had been something about the gaze of this stranger, and in the tone of his voice, that had interested Agnes, and she was on the point of sending some one to inqure his name, when she again heard his voice exclaiming, "My dear Trevor, how do you do?" which was immediately succeeded by a joyful exclamation on the part of Trevor; who, hurrying him through the crowd, saying—"Come, I must introduce you to Mrs. Trevor," broke into her circle, and presented the stranger as "Sir Robert Leslie."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LIBRARY.

I have tales for all sorts of women,
And protestations likewise of all sizes,
As they have vanities to make us coxcombs.
BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

LESLIE'S establishment was *si bien monté*, and the whole of his domestics so well trained, that by the time of his arrival in Audley Square from the Marchioness's party, his whole suite of apartments were ready to receive him; and the next morning found him "at home" in his library, with every thing about him precisely the same as though he had never quitted his house. Leslie had many of the true ideas of an English gentleman, and would never have thought of going abroad to spend his income among foreigners, while he kept no establishment at home. Leslie Hall, therefore, in Leicestershire, and the town-house in Audley Square, were both kept with competent establishments, and sometimes formed the residence of one or other of the different branches of his family during his absence.

The library in which he now lounged over his chocolate was his favourite apartment of a very superb suite of rooms, more peculiarly appropriated to himself and his private pleasures. Its windows opened into the garden, and it was divided into recesses and compartments, each devoted to a particular subject of literature, which was designated by some cast from the antique, or by the statue of some modern artist, where the antique did not furnish an apt illustration. Leslie was a patron of the arts, because their contemplation gave him pleasure: he was an encourager of talent, because its exertion afforded him entertainment; and as pleasure was the only thing he lived for, and as his passions were his masters, not to say his tyrants, every thing that could in any

way tend to the accomplishment of the one, or the gratification of the other, became the object of his attention.

In pleasure, however, he had the merit, if merit it be, of being a complete Sybarite ; every enjoyment of his senses was *recherchée;* nothing low or vulgar could excite him, though excitement was one of the greatest pursuits of his life, and he had cultivated it till he could not exist without it.

With such a disposition, and with such ample means as he possessed, no wonder that Leslie pursued pleasure in every form in which she appeared to tempt him, and not much wonder that a man who had no code of morality but that of enjoyment, should permit his violent passions to lead him to the violation of everything in their gratification, even to those ties which are generally considered the most sacred in society. But we will not anticipate ; we will not prejudice any one against our hero, but judge by his actions the precise meed of praise and blame which he merits, though we do anticipate that this will be no easy task.

Leslie swallowed his chocolate, reading note after note as they came pouring in from everybody who knew of his arrival : many of these were folded in those curious and quaint shapes, and written upon those tinted papers which females generally choose for their billets. Some of them excited smiles of pity, some of contempt, and some elicited a Pshaw ! but most of them were consigned to the flames ; some were laid carefully by for his own proper answer, and others were handed over to La Tour, who well knew the part he was to play with their writers.

His correspondence despatched, he saw the managers of the Opera and the French Theatre ; arranged his boxes for the season, and designated to the one a cantatrice from Milan, and to the other two *artistes bien aimables et de la premiere qualité*, whom he wished to have engaged ; and both the managers immediately promised an acquiescence with these wishes, without the slightest consideration of the interests of the theatres under their superintendence. To oblige a patron was their paramount duty ; and many a time is a poor manager of our foreign theatres compelled to sacrifice a large salary, that might have been devoted to the payment of real and attractive talent, to gratify the *penchant* of some noble patron who makes this engagement the *sine qua non* of his patronage, and of his box.

As card after card arrived, Leslie, who had possessed some slight forebodings as to his reception in London, became easier, and indulging himself in sundry sneering reflections upon the caprices of what was called the world, gave himself up to his usual hearty contempt for public opinion.

"Now here," said he, "had I, like a poltroon, sneaked and begged my way back into society, by aping repentance, why they would have kicked me out of it; but by braving them and showing that I do not care a straw for them, I am courted from all quarters; and it is for the opinions of such as these, that men make life a misery instead of a delight, by curbing those passions which were bestowed upon us by a bounteous nature for our enjoyment. Here, La Tour, answer these cards according to your own fancy; you may dine me where your please; quadrille me where you please; I give you a *carte blanche*, with one exception, and that is, Trevor House; whenever a card comes from that quarter, let no engagement intervene to prevent my accepting it; nay, put off every other for any invitation from Trevor."

"Trevor, Monsieur! Celui qui nous a fait rire tant à Napoli?"

"Yes, Sir, Trevor. Pourquoi non?"

"Oh rien, Monsieur; mais—"

"Je n'aurai point de mais, Les Trovers—"

"*Les* Trevors!" with emphasis on the LES.

"Oui; il est marié."

"Et Madame?"

"Belle comme un ange!"

"Ha! ha! C'est bien différent. Je vous demande bien pardon;" and La Tour's shoulders paid a visit to the back of his head, while he muttered in a kind of sotto voce, "Le pauvre monsieur, c'est bien dommage;" the library door opened, and Mr. Trevor was announced.

"Trevor, my dear fellow, you are welcome, and thrice welcome, since you are the first who have welcomed me to England in my own house. This is liberal of you too. I was afraid that, as a married man, you might be changed, turned into a mere domestic utensil, of no other use than to stir the fire, carry a fan, with permission to gad just the length of your wife's apron string."

"Changed, Leslie! not a jot; you and Villars will find me just the same fellow you did in Naples (another visit from La Tour's shoulders to his head), ready to follow where you

and he will lead—as I have often done before. Ah, La Tour, how do ?"

"Nay, nay, Trevor, you have given up your liberty—fettered yourself with voluntary chains—quitted our glorious society of free knights, and are only fit for the *ménage*, or the *manège*, which is sometimes much the same thing."

"Oh I beg your pardon ; you don't know Mrs. Trevor ; she is anything but *exigeante*, I assure you, and permits me to frequent my clubs—give my bachelors dinners—and to be a *garçon parfait*, with the addition of a *domus*, which I will say is never rendered anything but *dulce*, and I am sure you will find it so whenever you choose to make it yours"—another shrug from La Tour.

"Why, Trevor, you will give even me an inclination for matrimony, if you go on at this rate ; you seem employed as a decoy duck, and sent out on the wing to entrap others into the snare which sits so easily and gracefully upon yourself, because you are used to it."

"Ha, Lesile, you are at any rate still the same I see ; but let me warn you, my dear fellow, don't *debiter* any of these free principles before Mrs. Trevor ; she has received and welcomed all my friends as though they were her own ; to be known and liked by her husband, is a passport to her favour, and I would not have you excluded. I would have you well with her (La Tour shrugged his shoulders again) though that cursed affair of the little countess has cast a stigma upon you, which it will require all your good behaviour to get over, for she has some d—d odd old-fashioned notions upon these points : however, you made a good beginning last night ; your defence of her favourite Shakspeare pleased her ; and she says you said something about nature that could not come from a bad heart."

At this moment a voice was heard coming through the anti-rooms. "Oh, up stairs, in the library is he ?—never mind—won't trouble you, my fine fellow—could find my way blindfold—"

"That perpetual jackall to other people's desires, *D'Oyley* : have you given him any commission ?"

"No," said Leslie, "you are the first person I have seen ; but I have no doubt he is come in search of me ; for he is really a much greater bore from his civility than other people are by the contrary ; now adieu to the sound of any other person's voice than his own." Open flew the door, and in came D'Oyley.

"Ah, Sir Robert, my dear Sir Robert, welcome, thrice welcome to England and London, for what could England do without London? Ha, La Tour, what, with your master still? —a chair—a chair—wheugh!"

"Why, D'Oyley, what's the matter?" asked Trevor.

"Matter! why that malicious devil Lady Betty Lascelles has given me a trot two miles after a fan she never lost; and her sister insisted upon my going to the observatory at the top of the house to see what sort of a day it was."

"Ha! ha! ha! with both of which desires you complied?"

"To be sure: how can one refuse to be civil? and if there is anything I do understand, it is civility. By the by, Sir Robert, do you remember giving me a commission the day before you quitted England?—beg pardon for the unpleasant allusion —but you gave me a commission to buy a particular edition of Rousseau?"

"Upon my word, D'Oyley, I cannot precisely recollect."

"Oh but you did! It was just five years ago last March. Well, as luck would have it, in my way here this morning I found it at Evans's, stuck in between the 'Rights of Women' and the 'Age of Reason,' decorated with a splendid binding, amidst a parcel of unbound lumber on morality and divinity. It seemed mightily ashamed of the dulness of its company; so I ordered the bookseller to send it to you, and place it to your account for the year eighteen hundred and twenty-eight. It is the very best edition; for if there is anything I do understand, it is books."

"Oh, I remember; it was just at the time I was laying siege to a little heart that doted upon sentimentality, and I wished to engage Rousseau as an aid-de-camp."

"Sapper and Miner you mean, baronet: doesn't he, Trevor?" interrupted D'Oyley. "Oh! but I forgot you are a married man, and don't understand these things. Ah, Trevor! you have a charming wife. Do you know Mrs. T., Sir Robert? if not, I'll introduce you. But I see you are adonising; let me send you a little of my *huile à la rose blanche*, 'tis a distillation of my own; beats Bayley and Blew out of the field; gives a brilliant gloss to the *moustache*, and distributes a delicious perfume through the surrounding atmosphere. If there is anything on earth I do understand, it is perfumery."

"Thank ye, D'Oyley; but you know I make no toilet," said Leslie, as his valet adjusted his stock.

"No toilet?" exclaimed D'Oyley; "Come, that is good,

is n't it, Trevor ? when all the world knows you are the most indefatigable labourer in the vineyards of libertinism that any romance-writing lady of the nineteenth century ever described or thought of in the utmost luxuriance of her imagination."

"You flatter me." La Tour, who continued writing the cards at a distant table, again shrugged his shoulders.

"No, honour ! you may believe me ; mayn't he, Trevor ?"

"You are mistaken; indeed you are," said Leslie. "I take everything calmly; I may throw the net, but I never, never bait. The fish always swim into the meshes of their own accord."

"Les pauvres petits poissons !" murmured La Tour.

"Well, how the devil you manage it I cannot tell," said D'Oyley. "Here I fag for the women from morning till night, and from night till morning. If they wanted a pattern of a Chinese lady's slipper, or a mandarine's head-dress, a pound of unadulterated green tea, or any other article of curiosity and scarcity, I believe I should ride post to Canton to procure it. If their caprice wished for the feather of an Indian peacock, I dare say I should make a voyage to Hindostan to pluck it from his tail. I would run from here to Finsbury Square to pick up a lady's reticule, while I believe you would not cross the way to pick up the lady herself. Yet are you adored by the whole sex, while poor I am thought nothing of."

"My dear D'Oyley, you don't understand the sex."

"Not understand them ! come, that's good, isn't it, Trevor ? I that have been in love with every celebrated beauty for the last ten years ; I that have danced with dowagers, and checkmated their grand-daughters ; not understand them ! when if there is anything I do understand, it is women ; my dear baronet, I've studied them."

"Yes, D'Oyley, as the butterfly studies botany ; just flapping your wings upon them *en passant*, so that you never taste the sweets of any of them. Do you expect to ascertain the depth of the ocean by skimming its surface ? No, no ! your knowledge of woman is much like that of the would-be philosopher, who has dipped into all of the sciences without initiation into any of them. His mathematics are confounded by his metaphysics, his metaphysics subverted by his mechanics, and his mechanics blown to the devil by his chemistry."

"Mr. Hartley coming up, Sir Robert."

"My cousin Hartley in town? then I must prepare for a grave face."

"And I too," said Trevor. "He is the matter-of-fact lover of my sister Emily; so to avoid it *au revoir*, you 'll be at White's, or I shall meet you in the Park, or somewhere,—at present anywhere to avoid a lecture." And away went Trevor.

"Which I," exclaimed Leslie, "know full well how to receive, as harmless as though I were covered with the shield of Achilles. Hartley, my dear fellow, what! heard of my arrival, and come to welcome me with a lecture?"

"No, cousin Leslie. If the lectures which your own conscience must have read to you have failed of their effect, my arguments must of course fall powerless to the ground."

"Well, then, pray believe that my conscience has done the duty of all consciences, and it will save us both a vast deal of trouble," said Leslie.

"Oh! a vast deal," exclaimed D'Oyley; "Conscience is very impertinent, and every thing impertinent ought to be decidedly cut; and if there is any thing I do understand, it is cutting—from a card-paper pattern, to one's best friend."

"Aye, Mr. D'Oyley, but mind that conscience does not cut in return."

"But what constellation," said Leslie, "my dear Hartley, has had sufficient attraction to draw you from your rustic retirement? Ever since we quitted Christ Church, I have buried you in logic and philosophy, and expected to hear my next intelligence of you, in the general reward of all great geniuses and profound students, a Greek epitaph with a few Roman letters at the end of it."

"Quite appropriate; an epitaph in a dead language, which I shall be very happy to translate for the benefit of the unlearned and the ladies; for if there is any thing on earth I do understand, it is the dead languages."

"No, no Leslie! philosophy has not been my pursuit, I assure you; nature has made me the simplest of her children, and in nature alone have I found sufficient to admire and enough to please."

"Nature! why, cousin, you are a perfect epicure in pleasure. Nature, too, is my pursuit."

"Egad, baronet, you are right," said D'Oyley. "But Hartley pursues her in trees and turnips, while you follow her in the delightful form of woman."

"True, D'Oyley, but unfortunately nature is not more disfigured by the shears which clip a yew-tree into the form of a peacock, in the leaden Venus which decorates a citizen's garden, or in the mathematical figures of a Dutch plantation, than in the affected sensibility, the rouged cheek, the enamelled lip, the pencilled eye-brow, *gigot* sleeves, and padded back, of a modern fine lady *à la Française*."

"Egad, right again," exclaimed D'Oyley; "woman is the most unnatural piece of nature in the world."

"There, Mr. D'Oyley, you are wrong," said Hartley; "on woman nature has originally bestowed her choicest gifts. For if they would but follow her dictates, where would she shine with more effect! Can the sun, sparkling upon the clearest stream, yield more lustre than the liquid eye of a beautiful woman, which, like the tranquil wave, seems to catch its azure tint from the heavens themselves? Can any flowers give such pleasure to the botanist as those which blossom in the garden of her cheeks?"

"Egad, Hartley, quite poetical," exclaimed D'Oyley.

"And quite as romantic," added Leslie.

"Well, cousin Leslie, you know we always differed in these points. Like the bee, you could always leave the flower whose honey you had tasted, to wither in the evening's blast, while you sought the same repast in another, that opened its fresh blossoms in the sunshine of the morning."

"Oh my dear coz, I have all the arguments of all the moral philosophers against my system by heart."

"Or rather by rote," said Hartley.

"Look round my library; there they are, all ranged in rows; very good for show, but of little use in practice."

"Ethics, literally laid upon the shelf, I declare," observed D'Oyley.

"Yes, there they are," continued Leslie; "and observe, all in good company. Venus pointing to Heaven from the top of my folios on divinity, because they both profess to lead to the same place. Bacchus presses his Tuscan grape over my morals—"

"That it may no longer prove a dry subject," interrupted D'Oyley; "well, if there is any thing I do understand, it is repartee."

"Iris presides over my metaphysics, because she is always in the clouds, and seems to ride upon a tangent; Momus puts Melpomene and Thalia out of countenance over the drama-

to show the triumph of farce over wit and feeling; Cupid sits sharpening his arrows over my poetry; while the graces are for once emblematical of gratitude, by supporting Lord Chesterfield, to whom they were so infinitely indebted for their introduction to high life."

"Ha! ha! ha! a most judicious arrangement, truly; an quite worthy of the baronet, isn't it, Hartley?"

"Oh, quite! but by their splendid bindings, you have attended to their outsides, however you may have neglected their contents."

"Oh! my dear cousin," said Leslie, "inspect them, and you'll find their outsides quite emblematical of the pages within.—My stoical philosophers I bind in Russia, to depict their frigidity—"

"Or rather," said D'Oyley, "to show that they are banished to Siberia—"

"My ancient poets I case in classic vellum—"

"And your moderns—"

"I hang a calfskin on their recreant backs—while Ovid, Catullus, Secundus, and Little—you will find in sheets,

"Loose, unattired, warm, and full of wishes."

"Aye, Sir Robert, I see it is with you as with all of us. Woman is indeed the pole-star of our attraction—the goddess of our adoration.—Hartley, give me a pinch of snuff.—Good, very good; if there is any thing I do understand, it is snuff."

"Well, for my part," said Hartley, "I love the sex; but neither with your freedom, Sir Robert, nor with the devotion of Mr. D'Oyley. I look upon woman as sent to ameliorate the many evils which cross even the most prosperous paths—as calculated, when their talents are neither flattered nor perverted, to constitute the truest happiness our nature is capable of enjoying."

"Oh!" exclaimed Leslie, "as to that for which they were intended, they have wandered so far from the path, that their original destination is scarcely to be discerned on the map of the female understanding; all I know is—they are my delight—and I inquire no further."

"But rest contented," rejoined Hartley, "with the destruction of the object which contributes to your pleasure, as the worm exists upon the rose it destroys."

"But how the devil do you contrive to please the women as you do?" asked D'Oyley.

"How do you think, D'Oyley?"

"Why, by being civil and obliging."

"No such thing," said Leslie; "your civil and obliging persons are the most annoying things in the world." A shrug from the shoulders of Monsieur La Tour.—"How do you think, Hartley?"

"Perhaps," said Hartley, "by praising the qualities they possess, which deserve praise."

"Wrong again," pursued Leslie. "It would be too much labour to find them out—so I e'en praise them for qualities they do not possess—discover charms which nobody has yet thought of in their persons; and sentiments they never dreamt of in their minds. And like the world, who quit the beaten paths of known truths, to read with avidity fictitious accounts of wonderful discoveries;—so will woman, lovely woman, delight in the lie, and love the liar;

"Hug the offender and forgive the offence."

"But do you never poetise them?" asked D'Oyley.

"No, indeed; sighs and sonnets may, perhaps, do for a pretty boarding-school Miss in her teens, whose whole education consists in just enough French and Italian to read warm novels with the help of a translation, to which they always refer when their ignorance of the original prevents their arrival at the *dénouement* so speedily as they may wish; and whose musical knowledge enables her finger to play at leap-frog through an accompaniment on the harp or piano, just to say she has a soul for music."

Hartley here could not help joining in the laugh, while Leslie continued: "As to your country ladies, whose sole stock of literature never reached beyond the Spectator or the Tatler, who have learned to be virtuous from Richardson's Pamela, and studied the arts of men from Clarissa Harlowe—these I leave to you, D'Oyley, and to you, cousin Hartley."

"Upon my soul, we are infinitely obliged, my dear Baronet!" exclaimed D'Oyley.

"But, gentlemen, good morning—my return has of course involved me in a multiplicity of business.—D'Oyley, I shall meet you at White's; and in the mean time, perhaps, you will drop in at Tattersal's or Morris's, and look me out a fine hackney for the parks."

"With the greatest pleasure, Baronet; for if there is any thing I do understand, it is horseflesh;" and away tripped D'Oyley, delighted at having any thing to do for any body: but more particularly for Sir Robert Leslie, who he already perceived was to be again a feature in society.

"Hartley, I suppose I shall meet you at Trevor's at dinner, as Lady Emily is there."

"Do you dine at Trevor's?" inquired Hartley, earnestly.

La Tour looked up from his occupation, and his eye encountered that of his master, as he said with *nonchalance*—

"To be sure I do; we met on the continent, and I found him such a pleasant fellow, that I am anxious to cultivate his acquaintance in England." Again his eyes were met by those of La Tour, whose shoulders were again paying their accustomed visit to his head. Hartley took his leave.

Leslie hummed an air from Giovanni, and paced the library. Suddenly stopping before La Tour—"La Tour," said he, "écoutez."—

"Oui, Monsieur."

"Il faut que tu fasse la connaissance des domestiques de Monsieur Trévor."

"Oui, Monsieur."

"Et particulièrement de la demoiselle de Madame. Entends-tu?"

"Oui, Monsieur; mais—est-elle jolie, Monsieur?"

"Je n'en sais rien; mais n'importe: il faut que tu fasse sa connaissance, et même il faut faire l'amour, qu'elle soit jolie ou non."

"Oui, Monsieur," said the obsequious La Tour, who really loved his master as much as it was in his power to love any other human being than himself.

"Entends-tu parfaitement?"

"Parfaitement, Monsieur."

Leslie finished his air from Giovanni, and departed for his morning's stroll.

At eight he was at Trevor House, and evidently felt by the reserve with which he was received by Agnes and Lady Emily, that there was a prejudice against him in the minds of both those ladies.

He affected not to observe it; and as the dinner advanced, and his conversation turned on subjects connected with literature and the arts—and he descanted freely, yet modestly, on music—and led the way to a dissertation on the human heart,

its passions, its frailties, and the imperfections of our nature, the character of the man became gradually forgotten; and even Hartley began to think that Leslie was no longer the libertine he had formerly been.

From these subjects he passed to poetry and romance—discussed their influence on the imagination, and found an apology in violence of feeling and in a romantic disposition for many of the errors of human nature. At every sentence that either himself or any one else uttered that could possibly bear upon that scene of his life which was too well known to be denied, a sudden glow would appear to overspread his countenance, his voice would falter, a painful recollection and an internal regret seemed to overpower him, and the recovery of his self-possession appeared the effect of some strong effort of the mind; and thus he proceeded, till both Agnes and Lady Emily were almost persuaded the only crime they knew him to be guilty of had been the result of some sudden and violent passion, rather than of premeditation, and began to think the general character they had heard of Leslie, to be devoid of foundation, and arising more from scandal than truth.

In conversations of this kind the effect Leslie wished to produce was greatly assisted by that openness of countenance and almost carelessness of manner that seemed to set hypocrisy at defiance. His eye met those of the person he was speaking to with the full gaze of conscious honesty; and like that of many of his *caste*, it never had any peculiar expression when he was addressing even the woman he had determined to make his victim. Yet a close observer might, in the midst of this apparent openness, have discovered a sinister expression, almost imperceptible, and might perceive at intervals his gaze fixed upon some female form, as though he were measuring its fair proportions, and calculating upon the pleasures which its possession might be supposed to bestow.

During this dinner, and the evening which succeeded—for Mrs. Trevor had a select concert and supper in the evening—Leslie contrived to obliterate many of the prejudices against him.

Agnes was delighted with the boldness of his opinions—with their difference from those which are so servilely followed by others—and by the wit with which he satirised the follies—the respect with which he spoke of the virtues, of the age. His powers of description were great; and as he described

the various scenes through which he had passed, she could almost imagine she was herself wandering over the Alps, winning her way up the Pyrenees, or gazing upon the calm skies and olive-covered plains of Italy. There was scarcely a part of his conversation that did not strike some chord of unison in the mind of Agnes. The fact was, that Leslie had early perceived her romantic disposition, and he dressed his conversation accordingly.

Lady Emily was more cautious in admitting impressions in his favour; but yet could not refuse him her meed of admiration, and her pity for the remorse, which she might suppose from his manner, that he still suffered for his crime. As to Trevor, he was delighted that one whom he was proud to call his friend had overcome the prejudices, which he was afraid his wife might have imbibed against him, and saw no farther than the pleasure which he had always derived in his society; and even Hartley, who had known him the most reckless boy at Eton, and the most licentious gentleman-commoner of Christ church, was almost deceived into a belief that he had formed a wrong estimate of his heart.

CHAPTER XXIII.

EPISTOLARY.

He has as many mistresses as faiths,
And all Apocrypha.
——————— He was ever
A loose and strong defier of all order;
His loves are wanderers, they knock at each door,
And taste each dish, but are no residents.
BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

LESLIE was one of those anomalies in human nature that there was no studying. His sometimes apparent effeminacy, and almost *petite-maître* manners, were completely counteracted by his daring bravery.

His affectation of ignorance was contradicted by a conversation on all subjects, which showed at least a superficial

knowledge of every thing he touched upon: and where his imagination could work, it supplied the place of learning and of memory.

The accusation of an unfeeling disposition and insensibility seemed almost impossible to be just, where the greatest sins had arisen from violence of passion, of which nothing had been suffered to impede the gratification. But half these sins were known to the world, and those only so far as their pursuit and successful termination. The succeeding cold-heartedness, the subsequent desertion of his victims, the something worse that was whispered, remained untold; and like the gay butterfly, he was still the "admired of all admirers,"—

"The glass of fashion and the mould of form,"

in which all men dressed themselves—from whom all men modelled themselves—and with which women played till they discovered the sting only by its effects.

The mind of such a man as this it is difficult to describe by anything which he permitted to appear outwardly. We must therefore let him speak for himself in a correspondence with that partner of his travels and intrigues, who was not bold enough again to venture into the circle of his country's society, after having violated those ties by which it is held together.

Villars had been his school-fellow at Eton, his chum at Christchurch, his companion in all his Sybaritian intrigues of London and the Continent. Reading the same books, forming themselves upon the same models, they made all their studies tend to the same end.

Born with high passions, increased by the voluptuous nature of their pursuits, their end was pleasure—excitement was their aim; and everything which produced it was pursued, till, at the age of thirty, they might, like the Roman emperor, have offered a reward for a new sensation:—the world had no novelty to present to them but "Virtue;" and that was too cold a goddess to persuade them to follow in her train.

With regard to pleasure, they were in the state of Alexander, who wept that he had no more worlds to conquer—so they could weep that there were no new pleasures to enjoy.

Between men, who thus knew each other to the very bottom of their hearts, we may imagine a correspondence to exist without disguise; and it was to write to his friend that

Leslie, ordering himself to be "not at home" to any one, shut himself up in his library, where, amidst all the elaborate works which he had the day before enumerated as having been written on virtue and morality—amidst all the moral disquisitions of Bacon and of Boyle, and the works of more sacred writers, he had often sat down with no other view than to plot the destruction of innocence, and the violation of the most sacred duties of society. Nay, even in its very precincts, under the very eyes of those worthies of morality and literature——But he shall speak for himself in the following epistle :—

LESLIE'S TO VILLARS.

Talk not to me, Fred, of your olive-coloured ladies of Spain —your dark-eyed women of Tuscany—nor of your conversational and piquant demoiselles of France, for I am more than ever confirmed in my theory, that England is, after all, the garden of the sex—the *parterre* in which the choicest flowers grow indigenously. Yes, Villars, whether for wife or mistress—whether for the dalliance of an hour, or as a companion for life (a thing that you and I never covet)—whether we think of them with the views of a voluptuary, or look to them only as to the enjoyment of their conversation and society, in my mind, the women of England stand paramount among all the others in Europe ; and you know that I have tried enough of them to constitute my opinion a pretty tolerable authority. But I must not let my enthusiasm run away with me ; for you know I *can* be enthusiastic about women ; and what is better, can appear to be so to the dear souls themselves upon occasion, even though I may not be so in reality.

Well, and now to answer your queries as to my reception in this old emporium of all our early follies and frolics—dear London. Read, and for the future say that Leslie is a true prophet : for, as I prognosticated, my dear Villars, so has it turned out—my affair here is blown over. Time, that great physician to all the evils, and the great destroyer of all the goods, excepting wine and antiquities, of this world, has buried the event, which made so much noise at the moment, in a thousand others of the same nature, more interesting, because more recent.

These are not the days of our grandmothers, when elopements and crim-cons were scarce—hardly a morning paper

but now records some frail step or other: and the number of things of the same sort that have happened since my affair, together with a number which, from certain outward appearances, are anticipated, have closed the mouth of scandal against me and my little 'delito,' and given plenty of occupation for that most expressive feature of the human face with others.

My return was therefore welcomed every where. Among the men, you know, there was of course no doubt as to my reception; and as to the women, dear souls, I really believe that, had they dared, they would have received me like a triumphant conqueror, with the waving of their white cambric handkerchiefs. Good generous souls! you know they always exonerate our sex from blame, and fix it on their own; excepting indeed in their own particular cases, and then both you and I know that they can be bitter enough upon occasion.

Then, by ruining one you oblige so many, so that the majority is always in your favour. But to my narrative—I knew that the only way was to carry the thing by a *coup-de-main;* not to give the demurrers a moment for reflection and memory, but to dash at once into the midst of our old circle, and run the gauntlet of exclamations and surprises.

To give time for the papers to announce, (and the devils are always sure to have it,) that Sir Robert Leslie, Bart. "had arrived at his house in Audley Square from the continent," was to give time for all the old tabbies of widows, wives, and spinsters, to convocate and cabal, and make a party against me; and who knows what they might not have affected against a poor unprotected injured person like myself. Accordingly I toiletted at the last stage; gave orders to La Tour to drive through the squares, and set me down at the first house where lights and carriages should give the tokens of an assembly; dashed into town full gallop, and determined, like Cromwell and Buonaparte, to appear in the very midst of the conspirators.

As luck would have it, the first open house we came to was that of the old Marchioness of Townly.

Oh, Villars! had you heard the buzz that went from circle to circle, and from room to room, as the name of Leslie once more echoed through a London staircase! I verily thought the dancers would have become motionless, and the lights have been extinguished, as those were which we read of in our childhood in some fairy tale, and have I believe seen on the stage in a pantomime, on the entrance of some renowned

magician ; whether beneficent or not, I cannot call to my recollection.

Our hostess, the Marchioness, was just in the same place, and on the same satin-damask settee, receiving her company, as we last saw her five years ago ; that *memorable night*—dost remember it, Fred ? I do ! Her diamonds and her rouge seemed as though they had never been misplaced since, except indeed that there might be a little more of the latter to hide the five additional wrinkles in which the five additional years are recorded in that face, which, instead of being called the index of the mind, should rather be termed the index of time, for it is there he keeps his score ; and as though the old gentleman could not write, he never settles an account with us that he does not make his mark ; and putting his "crow's-foot" upon it, "delivers it as his act and deed."

I bowed upon the old lady's hand, with a "How d'ye do, Marchioness," of a day's separation, and sailed into the saloon.

Had I really dropped from the clouds, the sensation could not have been much greater. The awkwardness of Icarus was, that he fell upon his head ; but I, as usual, lighted on my feet.

"How did he come ? where from ? when did he arrive ?" met my ears in whispers in every direction ; and I was not quite deaf, my dear Villars, to the little addenda to these whispers of "How well he looks !" "Just the same *creature* ever !"

When a woman calls one creature, one is always sure to be well with them : they go a step further when they call us "wretch ;" though they sometimes, very unjustly, accuse us of entitling them to this mono-cognomen.

As I said before, the quadrillers, those who knew me, nearly stood still. Challoner bawled out *chassez-quatre*, and settled their wonder. Then there were little coteries of old women drawing up their prim countenances in corners, that were smoothed down by my address to them, and by all my bland inquiries after each of their favourite propensities. My memory flowed full upon me, and I was blessed with a perfect recollection of all their little peculiarities ; so I pressed them into my immediate service as pioneers to clear the way before me.

Here and there were half-dozens of young ladies, come out since we left England ; these were peering at me from behind screens, fans, and window-curtains, evidently showing that they had heard of me, and regarded me with a curiosity, which,

excuse me Ered, seemed more than gratified. Poor souls, they dont know yet what they are come out for!

The men of course welcomed me, all except one; and as you know the last time we parted he had a fair shot at me, I think he ought to have welcomed me too; but the fellow looked only as though he cursed himself for being a bad shot, which is very ungrateful, since he cannot but remember that I had my choice of firing at him at ten paces, or at an oak-tree at thirty; and chose the latter, to the utter demolition of a complete dose of bark, and to the safety of the third button of his waistcoat. I had ten times rather that a fellow should fire at me till his powder was exhausted and his punctilio satisfied, than that he should thus bear malice; besides, after all, he was only *her* brother.

Well, I was soon perfectly at home with every body: Lady D—— looked very doubtful, but I settled her with a waltz; Mrs. T. turned up her little black eyes, and lifted up her pretty hands: you must remember those taper fingers, because I have seen them within your own, when she little thought that you merely pressed her hand to convince me how well you were with her. Oh! Fred, Fred, you are a sad dog, and there is no reforming you; I brought her over in a quadrille, and before the *grand rond* she had made the grand tour with me in imagination: and with a little hesitation, and a softened voice, asked after "my friend:" she has not forgotten you, Fred.

At supper, two or three of our *married* ladies, who since our departure have taken to cards instead of quadrilles and *tête-à-têtes*, looked very grave; but I know it was only because they were not our choice, instead of those that were. All went off well. I was received at other parties just in the same way; I knew it would be so.

Veni, vidi, vici,

was my motto; and every thing was overcome. Depend upon it, my dear Villars, that impudence is the best friend a man can have in this world; and I no longer wonder at the French author who wrote an octavo volume in its praise, but think that he showed a clearer knowledge of human nature than has been exhibited in all the profound philosophy of those who have speculated upon virtue and morality. Here, therefore, I am, as usual, with a regular levee of all the young

men who have any regard for their characters with women: and with my table covered with visiting-tickets of every sort and kind, from the duchess of three centuries standing to the *parvenue* of yesterday; and thus much, Villars, for the resolutions of this vacillating world. So send me over an order upon Drummond, for my wager is fairly won.

Really now, I could moralize upon all this—aye, and moralize very prettily—but it would be all thrown away; for what have you to do with morality?

You ask me after London, and our old friends; which is, in fact, merely asking for

> ——————— a catalogue
> Of all the gamesters of the court and city.
> Which lord lies with that lady, and what gallant
> Sports with that merchant's wife; and does relate
> Who sells her honour for a diamond,
> Who for a tissue robe; whose husband's jealous,
> And who so kind, that to share with his wife
> Will make the match himself.—Harmless conceits,
> Though fools say they are dangerous.

How well those old dramatists knew human nature, Fred!

Well, to answer you, Villars, London stands where it did, and most of our old friends are where they were. The only difference is, that time has beautified the one, and dilapidated the other. But I know your word "friend" applies to one sex alone—that sex for which such devils as you and I are damn ourselves in actions, for which the dear creatures are sometimes very apt to damn us also. How ungrateful to their instructors, though very natural! for I never had such an antipathy to any mortal as I had to the pedantic fellow who first grounded me in my accidence; and flogged me for my syntax.

Oh woman! woman! what hast thou not to answer for? Should not you and I now be perfect hermits—very anchorites—models of perfection and consistency, but for these women? We certainly should. Had Galileo been endungeoned—forgive the word—for discovering the beauties and perfections in the heavenly bodies of women, instead of poring over, or rather under the stars, he might have born his incarceration with some degree of patience; for the recollections with which they would have stored his memory, would have diverted him in his solitude.

Dost remember our remark when we saw the finger of this

star-gazer under the glass-case in the Laurentian Library at Florence, pointing towards the sky as though there were an eye in the tip of it to discover more stars, and fresh beauties in the heavenly bodies? Dost remember, I say, where we would have placed it? Why, in the tribune to be sure; and made it point upwards to the "statue which enchants the world," and to the glowing Venuses of Titian behind her! Could Galileo, Tycho Brahe, Kepler, Newton, or the whole host of star-gazers, have bestowed their observations on more "heavenly bodies" then these?

In the contemplation of the Medicean Venus, Bianchini, her countryman, need not have gone to the expense of Campani's famous telescope to discover her beauties. Her proportions may be measured without the use of the Roman palm. Eh, Fred! they are open to the naked eye; and such transcendent ones they are, that they almost put us out of conceit with those forms, which have only the advantage of flesh and blood over them, while they are so inferior in every other respect. To be sure this advantage is to *ours* sometimes, and so I must be charitable and silent.

But Fred, Fred, let me lecture you a little on this same subject: you are contented with a too common order of woman; I do not mean as to rank, for there I agree you are as fastidious as I wish you to be, and would never descend to an intrigue among the *bas gens* any more than I would, unless there were indeed something supereminently lovely, which does now and then occur—the more shame for dame Nature to invest a pauper with her dearest attributes. But I mean as to character: you start—not character in the common acceptation of the word as applied to respectability, but character of beauty, Fred. You are contented with a fine eye—with fringed eyelashes—a round voluptuous form—a mantling cheek—a well-turned ancle—a swelling bosom—a Cupid-bow shaped lip, and white teeth. Now these are things to be found all over the world—the mere physical anatomy of beauty. But for my part, I would have *my* women made for myself, and keep them as peculiar in all their attributes from the rest of their species, as those of Raphael were, in contrast with the female forms and faces painted by his rivals and contemporaries—so many of them masters of their *art*, and so few of them masters of *nature*. You, Fred, are contented with the mere *via lactea* of our heaven. But I—I—Fred, must have a constellation, a

comet, my own peculiar star ; and as many of them as will venture to twinkle in my sphere.

But to our friends of a *certain* class ; by this you know I designate those who have no character to lose ; while my uncertain class consists of all the people of reputed reputation, who fill up the great portion of society, and have done nothing so glaring as to be "sponged" out of the canvass—YET—God knows what they may do!

The green *vis-à-vis* rolls about as usual ; the eternal claret-coloured barouche is everywhere ; the yellow-bodied chariot, with brown arms on its pannels outside, with which the arms within began to vie in point of complexion ; (I suppose these kind of fair ones, for want of other heraldry, think themselves entitled to the arms of their noble supporters ;) the piquant *demi-fortune*, decorated with brass outside and *in ;* the brown-striped cab ; and a variety of other vehicles of our acquaintance are still grinding the dust of the Park, and dashing through the mud of M'Adam in the streets. You see I designate each lady by her "carriage."

Time has made some inroads on all of these ; for five years are not to be passed over with impunity. And as to some other of our fair acquaintance, who once graced our famous coterie in —— Street, I am sorry to say, Fred, they are sunk down to the *pavé*—or below it—into the grave.

Does not this make you tremble ?

Repent in time, Fred, pray do. If you can't do it all at once, do it by degrees ; wipe off a sin a day, by devoting one hour to repentance ; but mind and don't make the balance at the bottom still the same, by committing another at night. Don't score up a sin on the debtor side for every one you knock off on the credit side. Take your hour before breakfast, while your claretty headache is upon you ; you will find it more adapted for the purposes of repentance than any other part of the day.

As to my uncertain class, stange to say, there is not so much vicissitude as in the other. They still go on in their own jog-trot way. Certain liberties and licenses allowed ; certain limits, which must not be passed, but which you and I, Fred, know are pretty extensive. The boundaries of the preserve are large, and as long as you pursue your game, and catch it according to the custom of the manor, why you may go on shooting till the end of the season without the fear of destroying the cover.

A few more *parvenues* have rolled up the hill of society on their golden wheels; and some of those whom we left at the top of it, have rolled down pretty quickly by the magic of "seven's the main" at —— 's.

Lady T—— and her set, and the Marchioness —— and her coterie, keep their ground. They take great liberties with each other's characters; but as neither of them are believed, why their "scandal's praise," as their praise would indeed scandal.

The *dilettanti reunions* continue, and Hanover Square is still the receptacle for talent, foreigners, French horns, and lions of all sorts; from the calculating boy to the last eminent composer. No instrument is in fashion, no voice can be the *ton*, no composition sell, no newly arrived *artist* expect success, unless they are first heard in the saloon of this hospitable mansion; more hospitable than select; as we used to observe with gratitude. For what should we men of "certain opinions" do without such kind hostesses as these! What should we do if certificates of character were required as a title to the *entrée?*

Time has also brought forward on the tapis some new maids and some new-made wives. Among the latter, a fascinating *artiste*, whom so many of us sighed after in vain, and who was only to be won as a wife, is married, and an excellent wife they say she makes. I hope nobody will spoil her!

She rolls about town in a carriage of her husband's invention, without traces, like that in the famous picture of Aurora by Guido.

Would you or I, Fred, knowing what we know, trust our wives, supposing we had any, in this wicked town of ours, anywhere, without traces? I should think not!

A blooming baby, a coquet in embryo, smiles from the carriage-window, a proof that "Time" has done something for her; for the old gentleman makes as well as mars. As to our men; our own set go on just as usual, intriguing with each other's mistresses; triumphing and triumphed over by turns. They do say that wives are not entirely excluded from the general exchange, but you and I, Fred, are by far too good-natured to believe it.

Dorrington, whose passion you know was ambition, was very nearly being *bien monté*. He had attained the last step of the political ladder; had scrambled up to the very

summit of the mountain; was on the point of being the premier, when he was suddenly tumbled to the bottom, with no other benefit from his elevation, than that the bruises he got in his fall were as great as though he had actually gained the apex of his wishes.

He is now laughed at by all parties; and so much for ambition!

Lumley, whose madness, for all these passions are madness, was patriotism, embarked his all, first in the emancipation of South America, and next in the cause of the Greeks. He was obliged to fly the one for fear of being assassinated by the party he supported, and hung judicially by the one he opposed; and has returned home from the other, without a guinea in his pocket, and with but one hand to take it out if he had; and so much for patriotism!

Glanville, the prudent, as he was called at Eaton, the miser as he was called at Oxford, who wished that his fingers had been endued with a Midas-power, has still continued to make wealth his god. He married a woman worth her "weight in gold;" and if his wealth could have found out any guard that could have preserved it as securely as her own ugliness ensured his wife's fidelity, it would have been secure indeed. But a great speculation in the funds, by which his enormous wealth was to have been quadrupled, failed, and left him nothing of his god Midas but the "ears;" and so much for prudence!

Now if these be the ends of ambition, patriotism, and prudence, is it not clearly proved that a life of pleasure is the best?

Don't you remember how our worthy sires, Heaven rest their souls, and bless their memories for putting us so early in possession of our estates, were won't to point out these three worthies as examples for our imitation; but I always knew we were wiser than our fathers; didn't you, Fred?

So much for them; and now, Fred, for the pith of my intelligence, the marrow of my letter. Put all that has gone before aside, as we do the rubbish that has accumulated in Rome, before we come to the tessellated pavement—the veritable soil of the mother and empress of the world. Dost remember Trevor? There's a bathos! it puts you in mind, no doubt, of Juliet's nurse,—

> Your love says like an honest gentleman,
> And a courteous, and a kind, and a handsome,
> And, I warrant, a virtuous—Where 's your mother?

and you say, What the devil has the empress of the world to do with our quondam acquaintance Trevor? Why, neither more nor less, Villars, than that this vacillating fellow, who always rowed in our wake at college, and followed our example at an humble distance on the Continent, has married a woman that deserves to be empress of the world, if everybody had their deserts.

But nobody has, else we should not be where we are; for we are certainly deserving of a throne or the gallows, though for the life of me I cannot tell which; and at present we have attained to neither of them.

But to this—yes, I will call her woman—but such a one, Villars!—one of my *peculiars!* How shall I paint her to your imagination, Fred? For it is too gross of itself to conceive such a creature without the aid of my pen; yet by my soul

It strains me past the compass of my wits

to describe her with any degree of justice.

Indeed, what artist would be equal to the task, even with the aid of all the colours which nature has so kindly furnished for the imitation?

The hand of Raphael could not have depicted her dignity; Corregio's mingling colours could not have portrayed her softness; the glowing pencil of Titian would have failed in her complexion; and Michel Angelo himself could not have done justice to her form.

As to her eyes, her complexion, her hair, I cannot attempt to describe them; her first impression, and I am yet speaking from first impressions, is like that which we both felt on our first contemplation of the Via Sacra and San Pietro,—so overwhelming, that the mind has no leisure for details.

It is precisely that kind of beauty which defies analysis; a beauty arising from a complete whole; a beauty which, as Hogarth says, "is seen and confessed by all; yet, from the many fruitless attempts to account for the cause of its being so, inquiries on this head have almost been given up, and the subject generally thought to be a matter of too high and too delicate a nature to admit of any true or intelligible discussion."

Imagine, if thou canst, Milton's Eve mingled with Byron's

Gulnare; Desdemona's delicacy with Juliet's voluptuousness; in short, imagine something that thou hast never seen, and thou may'st perhaps hit upon something like Agnes—Trevor—for Trevor is her name by *law;* that d—d law which confines a woman to one man, and gives him the power of monopoly over a magazine of charms that might have furnished beauties for a hundred of her silly sex. Then she is as unlike the rest of them in manners and mind as she is in person; she acts from feeling instead of form; sets ceremony at defiance; thinks for herself; patronises talent wherever she can find it; takes up the cudgels in defence of the oppressed and injured; detests affectation, and in the midst of fashion, is the creature that nature intended her to be, and that poets have made her.

She has imagined a world of her own, and peopled it according to her imagination; and strong in the native elegance of her own mind and person, astonishes the little minds of those who tread in the steps, or follow in the train of their predecessors.

She owes everything to the creative energy of her own mind. She acts, and thinks, and speaks for herself; she is original; and all the masters in the world, with their arts of mannerism, and dancing, and music, would have only spoiled her, as the wretched plasterer Maderno destroyed, with his frippery, the magnificent design of Michel Angelo.

Now is it not a shame that such a creature should be thrown away upon such a fellow as Trevor?

And how did he get her? say you. Why, they danced together at one of the Prince's juvenile balls, when children; they met together again at the Dashington university quadrilles, which you and I, like fools, used to despise, knowing that the head of the college was only preparing pupils to turn them over to our hands in a greater stage of maturity. He handed her into the carriage at her presentation; he danced through the first season with her; was opposed by her relatives, and carried her off. This is all I can find he ever did to obtain her.

The fact was, the lucky rascal was the first who whispered the word love in her ear; her heart and soul had already been attuned to the sound by her own nature and the nature of her studies. Trevor was thrown in her path at a critical moment: to do him justice, the fellow has enough ardour while a pursuit is new; the injustice done him by her rela-

tions roused the demon of opposition-generosity in her mind; her imagination filled up the outline of a hero, which Trevor had given her, with qualities of her own creating, and she became his. Will he keep her? what think you?

I say, Fred, I was just thinking what a glorious mistress such a creature would make! What a companion for the bright moonlight nights of Italy! What a form to contemplate in the placid bosom of the Larian lake! Then, the sensation she would create in the saloons of Florence! the comfort at the little albergos! Altogether——But I must not think of it, I suppose. By-the-by, don't pester me any more about that affair of the Lago Maggiore. The stipend I have left and secured, is enough to repair any injury in the world; and, besides, all the happiness which she enjoyed, and which I taught her to enjoy, ought to be put to the credit side of account; and as to the trumped-up deception of our anonymous gentleman, I set it at defiance, as I will himself the first time I meet him; all you have to do is never to disclose my real name, and all will soon be well. The most ruffled sea grows calm at last; and so, farewell.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CARELESS HUSBAND.

Men are April when they woo, December when they wed.

Men's faiths are wafer-cakes.
SHAKSPEARE.

THE history of Trevor and Agnes is, I fear, only a history of the majority of all those newly-married people in the world; the one of whom marries from an excess of passion, inspired by the beauty of its object; and the other, without a thorough knowledge of the heart and disposition of the companion they have chosen for life. For life! think of this, you who are on the brink of matrimony, and deceive not yourselves with the idea that the pleasant companion of an

hour can always become the steady companion for a whole existence. Think not that the exuberant gayety arising from the excitements of vanity and society can last through the tedium of common-place domesticity. You, who are in search of wives, judge not of your mistresses at the harp or piano, smiling under the plaudits obtained by their performance; or in the quadrille, under the excitement of exercise and hilarity, and the hope of out-dancing their rivals. And you who are thinking of husbands, judge not of them in the pleasant conversation of the dinner and supper tables: be not led away by the brilliancy of wit, which sparkles only so long as the champagne of their existence lasts; and which evaporates or becomes dull the moment its exhilaration is past.

These are not the qualities for husbands and wives, though they may be very pleasant for flirters and flirtees. Recollect, that marriage is not a flirtation: that its happiness must depend more upon the heart than the head—more upon the constancy than the violence of passion. Wit cannot last in man, nor music and beauty in woman, through the half century which people run the risk of passing together when they put on the matrimonial chain.

Young people, wishing to attract each other, array themselves in all their powers of pleasing. Young ladies do their best to exhibit their accomplishments; young men exert all their talents to be entertaining. They both think each other charming; and they each set down what they see to the score of natural disposition, and not to the forced effusions of a wish to please. Thus the pleasantest parts of character being always, and perhaps the only ones, exhibited before marriage, every thing after it becomes a burden. Every day some virtue or other, or some accomplishment, for which credit had been given, fades and drops away; all that they had imagined romance, becomes mere common-place. It is like getting behind the scenes of a theatre, where by finding the thunder to be tin—the lightning, phosphorus—and the diamonds, tinsel—the illusion becomes destroyed; our pleasure is gone; and we only wonder at the ease with which we have been deceived.

What a melancholy state must the heart be in while this change of sentiment is operating—while it is screwing up its courage to meet the truths that are every day dissolving some fairy romance, and pouring cold water upon some san-

guine anticipations of happiness, which, perhaps, an unkind word has blighted with disappointment for ever!

This is a much more melancholy feeling for the woman than for the man. He has a thousand resources: habits, to which he may return; old friends, who are glad that marriage has not made him a milk-sop: perhaps a mistress, who renders herself more charming and more attractive than ever, that she may triumph over the wife she hates. But she, the poor wife, has none of these resources—she has left all—has no power of return: no hope of pleasure, but in her husband; and her love for him evaporating, has only to fence her heart securely against the admission of another passion, to prevent herself from being degraded as well as unhappy.

All this is melancholy, but it is true. For were it possible for us to look into every mind, we should shrink with dismay at the many, in which we should find deep and bitter repentance for this great and important step of our lives That so few people confess this, and that so many put a good face on the matter, arises, perhaps, from the shame of acknowledging their own folly; and that they have been mistaken, from the certainty that there is no remedy for it; and from the dread of ridicule which such a repentance is always sure to create.

From each other this repentance is even more carefully concealed than from the world at large; and is never shown or expressed, unless in some moment of bitter passion, when the truth will plunge out in spite of prudence.

This acknowledgment once made, even under the influence of passion, must embitter domestic comfort for ever. Its recollection must rise up like a spectre to scare away pleasure, even in moments of the greatest tenderness, should they ever return after such a confession. It is an acknowledgment that must crush passion in the bud, and cut the link, that binds husband and wife together, asunder for ever.

This it is that makes married people so careful of the expression of this feeling: and yet how many—many—many there are, who when alone, or in their own mind, and in that secret corner of the heart, which they open to nobody; not even to the most sacred confidence of the purest friendship, and which is indeed closed to every one, except themselves and their Maker; acknowledge and curse the precipitancy of a passion which induced them to form a connexion, the

chain of which is galling them daily and hourly, and from which nothing but death or guilt can free them.

In these matters, as in almost all other disagreements and quarrels in the world, there is generally fault on both sides. Men are too apt to forget that they have praised their wives into imagining themselves angels; and women too frequently neglect the exertion of those accomplishments and manners that induced this praise from their lovers, when these lovers have become husbands.

"Le danger du mariage est que les femmes trop souvent nous permettent de trouver que la société où nous cherchions le plaisir," says a French author; and the French have the best *verbal* code of the "morale de société" in the world.

Another, not unaptly, observes, "C'est aux hommes d'obtenir les femmes; aux femmes à retenir les hommes;" and he further adds, and we fear too truly, "Mais presque toujours elles semblent l'oublier."

Perhaps in these two sentences of authors of one of the lightest and most frivolous nations under the sun, is contained one of the great secrets of that disappointment which so often attends the anticipated happiness of the married state; though there is doubtless also a very great portion of this disappointment to be traced in the difference of conduct evinced by lovers when they become husbands.

They forget that up to the moment of their marriage, every expression of their affection has been exaggerated; that they have drawn comparisons between their mistresses and others, only to exalt them in their own estimation, above all their companions; and the moment possession has cooled this frenzy of their feeling, they become languid in their compliments and attentions, and seem to realize the idea of the poet, that "they call them angels before marriage, which is the reason they wish them in heaven so soon afterwards."

This was certainly the case with Trevor: possession had cooled his ardour; the decrease of excitement had reduced the energetic and persevering lover into the polite but careless husband. His old pursuits and companions occupied him from morning till night; and the wish that his wife should be the "head and front of fashion" at home, and himself the gayest of fellows abroad, was the height of his ambition, and the sole aim of his life.

No wonder, with these feelings, that everything like domestic enjoyment was banished from his mind: nor could all the tender attentions of Agnes, nor the hints which her heart forced her to give, produce the slightest effect upon a disposition and temper which followed every evil example which was set him; and which would have sacrificed the whole comfort of his life to the fear of ridicule.

Agnes in vain attempted to shut her eyes to a conviction, the truth of which was hourly pressing upon her mind, and agonising her heart. All her early anticipations were disappointed; and when mentioned, were treated as romance by the very person who had encouraged her belief in their reality. Yet all this was done kindly, or carelessly, without an idea of giving pain: nor was there an expression which he uttered, that the most fastidious could have construed into unkindness. Trevor's was a careless, rather than a bad heart: there was a buoyancy of spirits, an hilarity of mind, a joyousness of disposition, and a gentlemanly attention to his wife, that would have made an indifferent observer pronounce him the best husband in the world.

But to recur to the *code conjugal* of the French: "Sait-on gré du superflu et qui nous prive du nécessaire?"

Had Trevor's conduct been absolutely unkind, Agnes was not a woman to complain. as it was, there was nothing that she could fix upon in particular. It was only the general alteration of his manner, the general break-up of all her hopes, and the complete disappointment of all her anticipations.

Her house filled by the parties which Trevor thought it necessary to his rank and consequence to entertain, she exerted herself in public to the delight of her guests, while she pined in secret over her disappointments, to the entire detriment of her happiness.

She felt it hard to resign all those hopes of domestic joys which she had so long indulged, and upon which she had almost lived, from the moment she felt she had a heart to appreciate them. She was like a person awaking from a dream of happiness to real misery, and who tries to sleep again, that the

Amabilis insania, mentis gratissimus error

of the youthful imagination might continue, though the reality had passed away.

The short period of happiness, too, which she had expérienced at Trevor Place, during the first few weeks of her marriage, when she had indeed realized all her anticipations. and had felt her heart full of happiness, rendered her present position and circumstances the more distressing from the contrast and their recollection ; and the idea that these pleasures might never return again, created a feeling of desolation, that realized in her heart the words of Dante :

> ———Nessun maggior dolore,
> Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
> Nella miseria.

Her feelings, thus thrown back upon themselves—her heart was in a perpetual state of expectation and disappointment—her eyes would overflow with tears in the midst of apparent gayety : sighs would intrude themselves in the song with which she delighted her guests ; and melancholy disturb her in the vortex of pleasure and dissipation, into which she was plunged by the habits of Trevor.

Perhaps the greatest misery she experienced during this trial of her heart, temper, and understanding, was the daily proof that Trevor afforded by his conduct of how wrong an estimate she had formed of his character To feel the object of our love daily sinking in our estimation, is one of the greatest trials to which human affection is subject. But the mind and heart of Agnes, in spite of her warm feelings, were too well regulated to love long where she could not esteem ; and as this latter feeling diminished, her love naturally became less, and her disappointment lost some part of its bitterness.

But where under such circumstances was her heart to find an *appui*—where was she to turn for consolation ? To Lady Emily, her only friend, being her husband's sister, she could confide nothing of her present feelings. Lady Emily had observed, and remonstrated with her brother on the imprudence and folly of his conduct ; but she was afraid to sympathise with her friend upon such a subject, both on her own account as well as on account of her brother.

In the mean time, the heart of Agnes could not remain unoccupied ; it was filled with all the best and noblest feelings of human nature, and with a longing after the gratification of these feelings which knew no bounds. It was indeed a heart filled with loving-kindness to all her fellow-creatures ;

and disappointed in her own hopes of happiness, she sought for means to add to that of others. She had her almoners in all directions in search of misery and misfortune; and where her purse could not relieve, her sympathy consoled the sufferer. Many were the deceptions practised upon her kindness, and disgraceful the ingratitude with which her bounty was often returned; but though she regretted this, it did not alter her mode of conduct. That her bounty was too indiscriminate, she was made sometimes to feel severely; but because there were some unworthy objects by whom her kindness might be abused, she saw no reason why she should neglect others who might be worthy of all she could do for them.

Such a heart and mind as hers, were naturally and keenly alive to the admiration of men of genius; and her house and fortune gave her great opportunities of collecting together all the talent that was afloat in town. She even sought a relief from her disappointed feelings in a perpetual round of society and dissipation; and attempted to lose the thought of her disappointment, in the gayety of the dance, in the pleasures of conversation, or in the delights of music.

In the mean time, Leslie had cultivated his intimacy with Trevor, till he had become perfectly the *ami de la maison;* and had so adroitly managed his conduct and conversation, as entirely to banish from the mind of Agnes every former idea she had entertained of his character, excepting that of his repentance for an error arising from momentary passion and irresistible temptation; for such was the colour he had contrived to give to the only affair of which Agnes had any knowledge, through the medium of her husband.

Trevor was himself such an admirer of Leslie, that he had exerted himself to the utmost to overcome the prejudices of Agnes against his admission to their more select societies; but he could not accomplish this till the art of Leslie and the representations of her husband convinced her, that he had been belied and most unjustly treated by the opinions which had been disseminated with respect to his character. This was precisely the right chord to touch with Agnes: to be once convinced that anybody had been unjustly treated, was quite enough to make her generous heart rise in his defence; and so, unhappily, it proved for her, with regard to Leslie.

With such feelings, it may be imagined he was not idle

in improving his position. He devoted himself to condense and display all the talent he possessed—put forth all his powers of entertainment—gave accounts of romantic adventures abroad—and interspersed them with occasional and natural regrets, that he had as yet found no heart that had possessed the power to make him look for happiness at home.

He perceived the gradual subsiding of affection which the conduct of Trevor created: he affected to sympathise with her by such expressions of general feeling, as she could not openly, though she might secretly, apply to herself—while he was the principal means of leading Trevor into all the dissipation in which he indulged, and which now frequently made him a stranger to his own home for days together.

Upon these occasions, Leslie would contrive that Agnes should hear him reproach her husband for his absence; and mingle these reproaches with representations of the happiness he was throwing away. Trevor was sometimes surprised at this conduct of Leslie's, but always set it down to his wish to be well with his wife—and in this he was not deceived.

While Sir Robert was thus making his way in the saloon, La Tour was not idle in the servants'-hall. Flounce had already received the subtle Frenchman into favour; and listened to his compliments and flattery, till Mr. Watkins was quite banished from her heart; and never came in her way without being "twitted," to use his own expression, with the superior politeness of Monsieur La Tour.

By these means many of the private actions of Agnes became known to Leslie: her hours of solitude were laid open to him: he learned that there were melancholy moments in her dressing-room that ill accorded with her gayety in public; and he read, or thought he read in all this, the coming on of that vacancy of heart which is so often the prelude to another passion.

He felt the game he was playing was secure as to the diminution, if not the eradication, of her love for Trevor; but there was an uprightness about her conduct—a noble sincerity of demeanour—an innate modesty that shone in all her actions, that gave him no clue to hope any thing farther. All he calculated upon was the necessity which he thought such a heart had for loving somebody; and he trusted as the one passion died away, another might spring up in its place.

and it was his determination to leave no effort untried to make himself the object of it.

For this purpose he was determined to use every art That all was fair in love was his favourite creed ; and he was indeed one of those who

> Would not turn aside from his least pleasure,
> Though the world's force were arm'd to bar his way.

He looked upon the world as only filled with temptations, opportunities, and pleasures, that they might be enjoyed free from all restraint by those who had boldness enough to seize upon them.

> He like the birds, great nature's happy commoners,
> That haunt in woods, and meads, and flowery gardens,
> Would rifle sweets, and taste the choicest fruits,
> Yet scorn to ask the lordly owner's leave.

In pursuance of his scheme, and the more closely to draw the meshes of the net he was spreading round his intended victims, he apparently used every means to hide the dereliction from his duties of Trevor, and did all in his power to excuse the carelessness of the conduct he exhibited. This told well for him with both parties. It confirmed Trevor in the idea that Leslie entertained a true friendship for him, while it raised him considerably in the opinion of Agnes.

Leslie, however, well knew that what he concealed in the drawing-room, was freely communicated by La Tour in the steward's-room ; and he was likewise well aware that Flounce was made the confidant of many of the actions of Trevor, which no female tongue could long withhold from communicating to her mistress.

Indeed, La Tour generally accompanied these pieces of information with such little observations of his own, on such treatment of such a wife, as excited the indignation of poor Flounce ; who thus became an innocent tool in the hands of these schemers to undermine the little esteem for her husband, which still remained in the mind of Agnes.

CHAPTER XXV.

VARIETY.

——————Full many a lady
I have ey'd with best regard; and many a time
The harmony of their tongues hath into bondage
Brought my too diligent ear: for several virtues
Have I lik'd several women; never any
With so full soul, but some defect in her
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she own'd,
And put it to the foil: but you, O you,
So perfect, and so peerless, are created
Of every woman's best.—

SHAKSPEARE.

ABOUT this period, Leslie received letters from his friend Villars, hinting at a subject upon which he had been forbidden to write, and to which Leslie himself never alluded, unless upon absolute compulsion. It appeared to be the only subject upon which these friends did not write freely and unreservedly: nor could anything clearly appear from the dark hints which were now and then scattered over their letters, upon the only point on which Leslie seemed to be peculiarly irritable.

In some of his epistles, Villars had also ridiculed the idea of Leslie's growing passion for Agnes; had taunted him with questions as to the measure of her attraction; and had desired to know what there was so peculiarly attractive to attach a heart such as his so long to one object, while the passion appeared to be any thing but mutual.

Sometimes he would launch out in praise of the new beauties which he had discovered in his travels since Leslie's return to England; complain of his own want of success, which he attributed to the absence of his able coadjutor and leader; and tempt his return by his description of women whom he knew to be particularly suitable to the inclinations of Leslie.

At others, he would describe the despair of this Signora

and of that Contessa; and even ventured once or twice to hint, that his sudden departure from Florence and his continued absence was attributed in the higher circles to his unsuccessful attempt on a certain Principessa, and his dread of a *rencontre* with the Principe *marito*, who was notorious as the best shot and the most expert swordsman in Italy.

In his last letters, Villars again urged strongly his return to Italy; and had expressed his wonder that a woman who seemed so inaccessible, should detain him so long in cold, drear England, while the fertile plains, and blue skies, and warm-hearted women of Italy, were all ready to welcome him with open arms. To these remonstrances, Leslie replied by the following epistle:—

LESLIE TO VILLARS.

You ask me, Fred, what in the name of wonder there is or can be in this dear delicious woman, thus to seize upon the heart and fancy (for my heart is, for this once, absolutely in the adventure) of such a capricious devil as I am; and faith, without seeing her—without conversing with her—without knowing her, it would be difficult to tell you.

You know I fell in love with Lady D—— for her eyes: with Mrs. S— T—— for a lock of her hair, which hung so carelessly and luxuriantly on her snowy shoulders, that, if you recollect, I told her I no longer wondered at the title of Pope's famous poem: Mrs. C—— attracted me by the roundness of her arm; and her cousin by the prettiest little foot in the world, which excited my curiosity by peeping so daintily under her flounced petticoat, at one of those *soirées* which the blind dowager use to give for the benefit of those who could see better than herself. You know one of my odd fancies—for somehow or other, I have had a great many odd fancies about women—was the mole which by contrast rendered the neck of the once charming little countess so much the whiter. In short, I have been in love with a hundred different women for a hundred different beauties, or oddities, about their persons; but here, Fred, I am in love with the whole. For all the beauties which my luxuriant imagination can think of, and you know it is luxuriant upon these subjects, seem congregated in the person of this woman. Like Shakspeare's Rosalind, she seems to combine the various beauties of various women in her precious self:—

Heaven once sweet nature charged
That one body should be fill'd
With all graces wide enlarged:
Nature presently distill'd
Helen's cheek, but not her heart;
Cleopatra's majesty;
Atalanta's better part;
Sad Lucretia's modesty.

Then her mind—her imagination—her feeling—her sensibility; all combine to render her still more charming.

She feels, she lives, she breathes, in poetry: she makes a romance of real life; and gives an indescribable interest to all the nothingnesses of existence: wherever she moves, a charm seems spread around her. She is like one of those creatures in faery-story, beneath whose feet one can imagine the beauties of nature to spring up spontaneously; one whose step and presence might be supposed to clothe a desert with flowers, and whose touch would draw a living spring from a barren rock.

What a being to inspire with love! what a bliss to know that such a creature centred her principal hopes of pleasure and of happiness in you! Eh, Fred, wouldn't it be real Elysium to lie in such arms as hers; to repose upon such a bosom as hers; to read in her eyes your own passion reflected—

————Oh the glory
Of two united hearts like hers and mine!

But I madden at the thought: I could dip my pen in lava—living, flowing lava—to give a vent to my imagination, when it dares wander this way; and when does it wander in any other direction? But I must be calm; or the mine I am laying for another, will be sprung by my own hot-headedness, and blow up myself:—as Rosseau says,—

Il faut que je sois de sang froid pour penser.

Is it not strange, Fred, that with all this sensibility; all this warmth of temperament; all these capabilities of loving; that she should be prudence personified:—that her delicacy should place a rubicon around her, which Cæsar himself would not have dared to pass?

Is it not strange, that a creature of such passions—for that a creature of high passions she is, her eye leaves no

doubt; such an eye, Fred, so dark, yet so clear; so bright, yet so soft—is it not strange, I say, that she should be ever so watchful over them, as to suffer no tell-tale devil to peep out, and designate the moment to attack her; and how to attack her, I cannot for the life of me tell. She is a perfect puzzle. There is not another woman of her feeling in the world, that by this time, either by accident or design, had not afforded a dozen opportunities which such a daring devil as myself might have turned to some account. But here, Fred, I am foiled—foiled and puzzled. There is no prudish withdrawing of hands, and no affected casting down of eyes; no coy avoidance of my society and conversation; but quite the contrary; and yet not one peg of comfort on which to hang a hope.

Thou knowest how I have talked myself into the good graces of the fair Parisiennes; how I have waltzed myself into the tough hearts of the Germans, and the pudding souls of the Dutch; how I have sighed myself into the arms of the voluptuous sex in Italy and Spain; and you and all the world know that I have hitherto been any thing but unsuccessful with our fair countrywomen here.

You know, Fred, how closely I have studied the sex in all countries, and thought that I knew them thoroughly, from the slipper to the tiara; from a heart string to a stay-lace. Yet here I am puzzled by a girl—a mere novice; with no more knowledge of the world than a cold, heartless husband could give her; and husbands are afraid to teach their wives too much.

What a pity, Fred, to make such a woman a wife! What a pity, in such a soul as hers, to make love nothing but the cold performance of a duty! What a mistress has here been spoiled by the absurdity of those human ties which fetter the heart; and would convert the gratification of our most natural feelings into a crime! Did nature bestow upon us passions warm as those with which my heart is now beating; and pleasures glowing as those which my imagination is anticipating, only that we should enjoy them, as the dancing bear does the little liberty his keeper allows him—in chains?

But let us look to the philosophy of the thing—to the moral, the virtue: aye, laugh, Fred, if you will; but I mean to say that morality and virtue are both in favour of my argument. For instance, could there have been such a crime as

adultery, if there had been no marriages? Certainly not. It is the law, Fred, that makes the crime, and not the thing itself; that, as we all know, is natural enough; and what is natural must be good; and I again leave the *ergo* to your own logic.

Marriages, says some sage or fool, and sages and fools are very much alike, upon the same principle that two extremes generally meet, are made in heaven. Why the devil then did'nt they keep them there? and not come to trouble our earth with them; for my part, I am very willing to wait till I get there for a taste of matrimony; arn't you, Fred?

It is astonishing in what different ways different people speak of this same marriage: some describe it as a banquet of never-ending enjoyment; some call it a curse, and some a blessing; but I rather think him in the right who described it as a *feast*, in which the grace was better than the dinner.

Marriage appears to me, Fred, in the light of one of those expensive locks which teaches a thief where the treasure lies, by the very care that is taken to preserve it. It is the lock and not the treasure that forms the temptation; and every mechanic in that line sets to work to invent a picklock that shall *undo* it.

I say, Fred, what a devilish clever fellow he would be, and what a fortune he would make, who could become a Bramah in the matrimonal lock, and invent some security against the violation of its *wards*.

Lord, Lord, what a run such an article would have with the poor devils of husbands.

Imagine a shop of this sort opened in the vicinity of St. James's, and think with what eagerness our friends, from A to Z—for the whole alphabet would scarcely furnish enough initials for the husbands that you and I know would give their ears for such an invention—would flock to purchase it. The only hope of a poor batchelor on the *pavé* would be, that the great demand might create a scarcity, or induce the sale of a spurious article, which, by giving the *marito* an imagined security, might make the way in some instances, a little easier.

I wonder whether Trevor would purchase. No, no; for his Agnes is so chaste, so high up in virtue, that even all his conscious neglect of her never creates the shadow of suspicion in him; she is so much above it, that it never enters his imagination to suspect her virtue. Virtue—what a word is that; in what does it consist? As ideas are received—in

woman, chastity; and in man, what? For certainly in our sex, this appears to be no admitted criterion of virtue: let us go—for I like disquisition, it is the only thing I am fit for—therefore let us go to etymology. From whence do we derive the word virtue?—for every thing is derived from words—words—words;—why, as far as my knowledge goes, and little enough it certainly is, from the Roman word *virtus*; and what does that mean?—why, as far as my little knowledge goes again, it means valour; not the valour to do a good action, as moderns would have it, but that absolute *bona-fide* soldier valour, that faced the edge of a Roman sword—resisted the efforts of a battering-ram, or penetrated the ranks of the celebrated phalanx. Well, haven't I plunged into a rapid stream, and swam across it in the face of the enemy's fire: haven't I mounted a breach at the head of a forlorn hope (no matter how many breaches I have committed since, or how many forlorn hopes I have created:) haven't I stood three or four times and received an adversary's fire from Wogdon's pistol at ten paces; and hav'nt I crossed swords with some of the best swordsmen in France and Italy, in defence of certain peccadilloes in those countries? If virtue, therefore, means valour, *ergo*, I am virtuous, and who dare deny it?

But let us look at it, Fred, in a more enlarged point of view; for you know I am any thing but bigotted, and therefore do not want to be thought virtuous, unless I really am so.—And yet, in this world how difficult is definition; how very difficult to define what is really virtue! Let us, Fred, look to some of those splendid instances which history, or, to speak more correctly, the romance of history, presents in those stories which were intended to make our young bosoms glow with admiration, and which were beaten into our fingers' ends with the ferula, or birched into us by that pedagogical sceptre, the rod, as rare examples of virtue. What should we say now, if by any casualty, arising from gas or otherwise, any little aperture should appear in any part of our beloved country, situated between Piccadilly and Whitechapel, (and all the convulsions of nature are partly attributable to Mr. Windsor's invention,) what should we say, I repeat to any gentleman, who like Curtius, would volunteer as the undertaker of the whole kingdom, and by burying himself, attempt to intrude upon the privilege of the parish scavenger, by filling up the hole? Why we should pronounce him fit for Bedlam or St. Luke's? And yet, in his day, this was called virtue.

Suppose some Pleb of a papa, like Virginius, to save a daughter from some daring devil of a patrician, like you or me, should plunge his butcher's knife into her heart; would this, which was then celebrated as a glorious action, and has been handed down to posterity as an instance of Virtue, be so considered now? Why, Fred, such an act would, at present, claim no other record than the Sessions Paper and the Newgate Calendar. Such a virtuous sire would now-a-days be hauled up by some red waistcoated street-keeper, before some unread Dogberry of a magistrate, be committed out of hand to the Old Bailey, and hanged by the evidence of these very people, (you and I, Fred,) who would have increased, rather than have diminished, his family, had he let his daughter alone.

The Gracchi, whom the Romans called patriots, we should call radicals; and if a coroner's inquest had sat upon Lucretia, they would have brought in a verdict of *felo-de-se;* she would have been buried in a cross-road; and I question whether any grand jury, under the circumstances, would have found a true bill against Tarquin. In more modern times, it is quite as difficult to ascertain whether Stafford was to be condemned as a traitor, or lamented as a victim; or whether Sydney was a martyr, or a conspirator. The fact is, that which is called a crime under one government, is considered a virtue by another. What is lauded in this country, is condemned in that. That for which we might ascend a throne in one hemisphere, would send us to the scaffold in its antipodes.

With all this contrariety of opinion among the heads of mankind, it is wonderful, Fred, that such weak mortals as you and I are, should find it difficult to make up our minds: or are we to blame, if, amidst such contradiction, we should cook up a little idea of virtue of our own, and think that it consists of pleasure: and now I think of it, that must be the truest virtue which makes the best use of all the opportunities that are presented to us; and the best use of every thing must be that which extracts the greatest pleasure from it: therefore, virtue is pleasure, and pleasure is love:

> That salt of life that gives a higher taste
> To pleasure, and then makes it last.

Ergo, Fred, love is virtue; and in that case again, how very virtuous I am. Indeed, with regard to women, I am the

most philanthropic person in the word ; and it is acknowledged on all hands, that philanthropy is a great part of virtue.

But some blame me for my inconstancy : now I contend, that I am the most constant creature under the sun ; I am always pursuing the same object—beauty ; and does not old Hogarth say, that "*variety* is an essential part of beauty ;" therefore my pursuit of variety is only a proof of my constancy to the main object. "The life and soul of love is sweet variety," says Lansdowne.

But I will ask you one simple question, which must in every logical mind set the matter at rest at once and for ever.

In a garden of beautiful flowers, Fred, was ever any man, aye, or woman either, content with plucking only one? Does not everybody make a bouquet of them, and wear it in their breasts till the flowers fade, and then go out into the garden again and pluck others ? To be sure they do. Is not this sensible ; and is not it unanswerable ?

It is true one gets into a thousand scrapes ; well, and don't I like them ? Is there any pleasure equal to getting cleverly out of them ? But then the pedagogues of morality say that our passions were given to us to be restrained : then why were they given to us at all ? why create a necessity for restraint ? and all the old women of the land join in the cry, (I don't believe the young women do,) and lift up their withered hands and say, Oh fie ! But for my part, I as well as most sensible and unprejudiced men think with the moralist Buckingham, that

> Our appetites are nature's laws, and given
> Under the broad authentic seal of Heaven.
> Let pedants wrangle, and let bigots fight,
> To put restraint on innocent delight,
> But Heaven and nature 's always in the right.

"So much for Buckingham ;" and is it my fault if nature has given me a large appetite ? 'Tis the sign of a good constitution, and to balk it would be to commit a kind of hypocritical suicide, and to kill myself with a consumption—

> ————I must have liberty
> Withal, as large a charter as the wind,
> To blow on whom I please.

What country is that, Fred, where the women were won't to

designate the number of their paramours by fringed tassels at the bottom of their garments, and wore them as marks of honour? That was a sensible country, Fred, and the women must have been good judges of trimmings, and most certainly appreciated us properly. I suppose Shakspeare had some notion of this place in his head when he makes Juliet talk of luring the

Tassel-gentle back again.

And yet I would not have this Agnes one of them for the world. No; by my soul I would not. 'Tis the very virtue that opposes them that adds to my desires—that adds fuel to the flame which is consuming me. It gives dignity to her beauty, and makes the accomplishment of my wishes a fit object for the ambition of such a heart as mine.

In approaching her, Villars, I feel as though she were one of the women of Chios, where classic tradition says, that for seven hundred years it was never known that a maid or wife committed any act to the prejudice of her honour. What in the name of wonder could the men have to do, and the women to talk about in such a country? There could have been no such fellows as you and I, Fred. And as for scandal, which the dear sex dote upon, why its name could never have found its way into a Chiosian vocabulary. But why do I say I feel as though Agnes were one of these women? By heavens! she is fit to be their queen; for they were cold and coy from their nature, while she seems prudent from principle;—prudent, Fred, in the midst of a host of passions with which I am sure her heart is filled, but which she controls with a master, or rather a mistress spirit, that I much fear I shall have great difficulty in lulling to rest even for a moment, to give these said passions the opportunity of running riot in my favour. Ah, Fred, you and I have lived in countries where duennas are in fashion; where fathers put the virtue of their daughters, and husbands confide the honour of their wives, to the custody of old women. But what are old women to young men? Do you remember how we hated these Cerberuses, with their three heads, and no hearts? Do you know, Fred, since I have known this Agnes, that I think prudence and principle, acted upon as they are by her, are far superior duennas to any that we have ever encountered? What a good thing for us, Fred, that these mental duennas

are not more encouraged than they are? Sometimes I am inclined to think, but it is only sometimes, and perhaps only when it suits my purpose, that were we to place a complete dependence upon woman herself, the nobleness of her nature would induce such an appreciation of the confidence reposed in her, as would prove the greatest and the best security against her betraying it. But stop my hand, or I shall run on so long on the main point of *my* thoughts, that I shall forget the main point of *yours*.

To it then—to this most disagreeable of all subjects. Why do you pester me with the Lago Maggiore still? Are they not satisfied with what I have done? is it not noble? is it not handsome? is it not sufficient for one with twice her rank and pretensions? is it not enough that I have taught her once to be happy, and in that lesson has she not learned her to be happy again? How unreasonable these devils are when we have done with them! aye, and before too! As to the claims you speak of, you know I laugh at them. There is none but the cursed scribbler of that cramp-hand written letter that can witness against me, excepting yourself. Nay, *you* are not in the secret, for it was all effected through him, whoever he may be; and though I have nothing to trace him by but a few lines of his hand-writing, I trust I shall find him; and when that is the case, he shall most surely rue ever having crossed the path of Leslie. You say she threatens to follow me. Well, as she imagines me making the tour of the Ionian Islands, and as my last and only letter was despatched to her by our friend Lumley from the shores of the Adriatic, and as that was a kind of a death-bed letter, I am afraid that she will have a great deal of trouble to very little purpose.—I say, Fred, if she be determined to leave the neighbourhood of the Lago, can't you persuade her to go to the cottage at Benaco? Change of scene, they say, is particularly good for mental invalids, and the mal-aria, so prevalent in that part of Italy, might cure her entirely of her paticular complaint.

What devils these women make us!

You reproach me, Fred, and say I was wrong in cultivating this woman's mind and manners, and accomplishments, and all that—and then—but I won't repeat the—then. Look, Fred, at the Borromean Islands, the Isola Bella, and the Isola Madre, were they not originally barren rocks without a leaf or tree? and are they not now planted with groves of cedar, cypress, citron, and orange-trees? are they not studded with grottos and adorned with terraces? and do they not smile with

flowers? and who, my dear Fred, has a right to enjoy these beauties? who has a right to pluck these flowers and bask on these terraces? Does any body in the world deny the right of him who took the trouble of their magical creation? Well, Fred, and if this be true, and I find a heart and mind barren as these rocks, and am at the pains to cultivate them, take the trouble of planting flowers, and increasing or creating beauties—ergo:—but, as usual, my arguments are so plain, that I leave the ergo to yourself.

Then you will tell me in reply, to pursue the allegory that I was not content with cultivating the Isola Bella, but must turn it into the Isola Madre. But that came naturally enough. La Tour tells me 'tis time to dress to go to dinner at Trevor's. Away then with everything else to the winds. If she flies, let her fly in any direction but towards England. She is not aware of my real name. But more of this when Agnes is not in my thoughts and heart; when she is there, there is room for nothing else until another comes, and then——well—then—farewell!

CHAPTER XXVI.

UNCERTAINTY.

——— I hold it positively as a principle,
As ye are strange things, and made of strange fires,
So we are allow'd as strange ways to obtain ye,
But not to hold. We are all created errant.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

In the midst of the dissipation into which the habits of Trevor, more than her own inclinations, plunged her, Agnes, however, shrunk from the heartlessness of the world by which she was surrounded. The entertainment of her imagination, however—mere enjoyment, even though of an intellectual character, was not sufficient for such a heart as hers. The gratification of her affections was absolutely necessary to her happiness; and having once tasted the sweets of a mutual

and a virtuous passion—having once enjoyed that truest bliss that human affection presents in the love of a husband, even her ardent friendship for Lady Emily was insufficient to satisfy the longings of her heart.

In the midst, therefore, of society and of gayety—in the vortex of dissipation—in the splendour of fashionable existence—and in the contemplation and enjoyment of the wit, talent, and genius which her circle presented—she felt a void; her memory would travel back to her early anticipations, and live again over those short-lived scenes of vivid happiness which characterized the few first months of her marriage, and a sigh of affectionate interest—of conjugal love—of desire for her husband's society, would escape her bosom. Her eyes would travel round the splendid apartments in search of Trevor—her thoughts would seek him; but the sigh she sent forth—the wish that was half uttered—the thought that flew after her husband, were all in vain. Her dream was over—she was awake—and could not sleep again. The light of day had dissolved the fairy visions of her fancy, or rather the darkness of night had come over the brightness of her morning.

The period at which we are now arrived, of the union of Agnes and Trevor, was precisely that period in which a husband may, if he pleases, confirm the affections of a wife. Passion cannot last for ever; and the care of each party should be, as their warmer feelings cool, to see that they are replaced by that esteem—by that tender friendship, which, when the result of mutual love and confidence, is the purest, most lasting, and most pleasing affection of which the human heart is capable.

The husband who values his own future happiness and the affections of his wife, should watch this period with the greatest anxiety. He should be careful, very careful, that the change from the lover to the husband be not so marked that she perceives or feels it; and above all, he should beware of permitting her heart to derive any of its principal enjoyments from any other object than himself.

It is the conduct of this early period of marriage that generally confirms the happiness or misery of a married couple throughout their lives; of course we are here speaking of people who have been united from motives of affection. As to those who marry from other motives, as they have never anticipated any high species of happiness from each other, so

can they never experience the misery of disappointment: and it is a melancholy reflection on the imperfection of human passion, to think that these marriages of interest and convenience generally produce less unhappiness than those formed upon purer and nobler motives.

Leslie, who, as he himself said, had literally studied women till he understood them from a "heart-string to a stay-lace," well knew that the precise period at which a woman's heart is most vulnerable, is that in which its first and warmest feelings are beginning to experience that soul-sickening disappointment which the commencement of neglect in a beloved and newly-made husband creates. Her mind draws comparisons between the ardent lover and the indifferent husband. Her imagination and feelings have been excited, and her tenderness awakened without being exhausted, and their legitimate object by his coolness repressing their expansion, the heart is too apt to find an *appui* elsewhere; and there are always a sufficient number of specious libertines abroad on the look-out to take advantage of these feelings in a woman's heart, by an appearance, or the promise, of keeping up the romance which her husband's increasing coldness is melting so rapidly into dull reality.

Leslie was calculating upon all these operations in the heart of Agnes, and was ever on the watch to supply the deficiencies which the increasing absences of Trevor created. He was careful, too, by his conversation, to keep up the romantic turn of her mind, and so dressed up his sentiments and language as to impress her with an idea that there was something like congeniality between them: and all this his travels, his adventures, his observations on human life, and his powers of description, enabled him to do so well, that Agnes began to wonder at the character he bore in society; and, from being the silent listener whenever his character was stigmatised with the epithets which it deserved, she became with her usual indignation at the injustice of the world, his defender.

Leslie heard this, but it gave him no pleasure. He was convinced that while she could thus speak of him, though it was to defend him, that her heart was untouched—that she saw and felt nothing more in his assiduities than his friendship for her husband—and that the only step he had obtained was to lull her suspicions of his real character to rest. This was, however, one point gained; and, like the spider, who sees

the fly pretty near his web, but still not likely to be speedily caught, he rested in silence to watch her movements, lest the slightest motion of his should alarm her, and betray to her eyes the snare he was preparing for her.

He would then turn his thoughts to Trevor, and invent new temptations to lead him from his home. This was, unfortunately, no very difficult matter. He was led entirely by the set in which he lived—a set of dissipated profligates of which Leslie was the head; and it was Trevor's glory, goaded on by the example and the ridicule of his companions, to show that he was too choice a spirit to be spoiled by marriage.

Thus he began to play and to drink deep—established a little *menage* with a newly-arrived opera-dancer, to whom Leslie, having known her in Italy, had given instructions to throw out all her allurements, and for whom Trevor's temporary *penchant* was increased by the occasional expressions of praise and of envy which escaped from Leslie and the rest of his set.

There was one thing, however, in this pursuit, that Leslie did not anticipate; which was, that he became so enthralled in the chains he was forging with so much labour for Agnes, as to find the success of his scheme absolutely necessary to what he termed the happiness of his life.

He had calculated that his own indifference would enable him to escape, as usual, with impunity. That which, in the first instance, had been a mere captivation of his senses, had however become, by the contemplation of the loveliness of her mind, as well as the beauty of her person, an overwhelming passion of his soul; and he saw that he must devote his whole energy and experience to accomplish wishes, which he felt would be his torment if they remained ungratified.

Incapable of that generous passion which would have sought the happiness of its object by the sacrifice of his own feelings, he had not courage to permit all the excellencies which surprised him—all the loveliness which excited his admiration—to induce him to attempt the conquest of his own vice rather than her virtue. He saw but one method of relief, and that was by the attainment of his object, the accomplishment of his end—the destruction of Agnes.

When first he saw her and marked her for his own, the momentary gratification of his senses, and the additional triumph over that sex which it was the glory of his life to flatter and despise—to elevate and to subdue, was all that he con-

templated; and, judging from others, he imagined that the carelessness of Trevor, united with her own warm feelings and his insidious arts, promised him an easy task.

He soon found, however, that he was egregiously mistaken in his calculations, and that such a woman as Agnes Trevor was not to be won by the manœuvres of a hacknied libertine.

Leslie had studied the female heart well, but he had studied it in a school where there were few such examples as that presented by Agnes; and by those he had never yet been attracted. He had been accustomed to press every passion of the female bosom into his service, and make them subservient to the success of his schemes. He had owed as many of his *bonnes fortunes* to the envy, jealousy, and vanity of the sex, as he had to their love. He had studied all the weaknesses of the female mind and heart, and had profited by them; but he was unaware of their strength, and he had never before met with such a mind and heart as Agnes possessed.

Many women would have been thrown into his arms by the carelessness of such a husband as Trevor, out of mere revenge for the slights with which he insulted her. But Leslie soon discovered how superior Agnes was to all those feelings to which, with other women, he had owed so much of his success; and in spite of the restraint it put upon him, he acted accordingly, till he found himself so wrapped up in the object of his wishes, that he devoted his life to their accomplishment; and with unwearied industry, he determined to pursue his scheme of first winning her heart, and then her person.

He had not hitherto, however, dared to breathe a word that could lead to a supposition of the existence of his passion, although his heart was boiling over with the ebullition of the sensation she excited; he saw that a premature disclosure would ruin all, and he had trained his feelings so completely as to prevent any betrayal of his wishes, till he saw the hope of their near accomplishment, or, till he saw their expression would not irremediably offend.

As the friend of her husband she had first received him; as her *own* she could not refuse to acknowledge him, after the many instances he had given of his sympathy with her distresses, and after the many attempts to call back her husband to a sense of his duty, for which she gave him credit.

She had heard much of his libertine character, and that had put her on her guard; but from her actual observation, she had no evidence of its truth, and her mind was secretly inclined to believe that he had been belied.

She admired his talents; delighted in his conversation; and was often induced to regret that they were not more worthily bestowed in making some woman happy as a wife, instead of rendering so many miserable, as it was reported he had done, as mistresses.

Sometimes she would rally him upon his determined insensibility to the sex. Upon these occasions, he would sigh and say, that if she knew all, she would not deem him so insensible as he was represented; then he would abruptly break from the subject, as though it were one that was painful to his feelings, till at length she felt fully persuaded that he loved, but loved unhappily.

This idea was precisely that with which the insidious Leslie had wished to impress her; and it was no sooner conceived, than every trivial circumstance tended to confirm its truth in the mind of Agnes.

This feeling created something like sympathy for him; he had sympathised with her in her distress: it was but natural, nay but just, that she should sympathise with him in return.

He knew this: he calculated upon it; and he was not mistaken: and he knew the power of sympathy to soften the heart, and particularly the female one.

Such an idea, too, invested him with a character of deeper feeling than any for which she had yet given him credit. This at once, in her eyes, diminished the other blemishes which were attributed to him; for, unfortunately for her, with Agnes, "feeling covered a multitude of sins."

She began to believe him the victim of many stories that were untrue, that had been disseminated to his disadvantage; and as this idea gained possession of her mind, her native generosity took his part; and her just indignation against the scandal to which he was sacrificed, made her think it a duty to rescue such a man from the odium which was attached to him so unjustly.

Perhaps, too, the wish would sometimes cross her mind, that Trevor had been such a being—that Trevor had possessed such sentiments as those, which Leslie so well knew how to express in a manner that was precisely suited to her romantic notions.

Her memory recurred to all the early fancies of her youth, when her imagination occupied itself in anticipating her future life, and in dressing up the actions which were to fill it, and the characters that were to perform them, according to her own wishes, or to the books she had read.

She recurred to her school-day fancies of a hero, careless of danger, braving difficulties, gay, generous, and daring any and every thing that gave

Hope of a pleasure, or peril of a grave.

As these old fancies crowded upon her mind, she could not help investing Leslie with those attributes.

His conduct as a soldier; his pre-eminence in society, which even his enemies were obliged to acknowledge; his talented conversation, and his superior manners, were precisely calculated to strengthen this idea, which gained ground rapidly in her mind, from the moment that she attributed the stories which were propagated against him to the score of calumny.

Then the insipient regret that she had not met with such a being earlier in life stole over her mind; but that was as quickly banished by the idea that he loved, and loved somebody that was insensible to his passion.

Then arose the question in her own heart, and a dangerous one it was,—Can this be possible?

Then came the restless curiosity to know who the fair one was that could penetrate such a heart as his was said to be. Her mind's eye ran over all the females of their mutual acquaintance; canvassed their personal and mental qualities to ascertain which was the most likely to have subdued him. But here she was completely at fault: none of them seemed likely to be attractive to a mind so confessedly fastidious as his. One was too common-place; another was deficient in wit; a third, in person; a fourth, wanted that grace which she knew he considered indispensable; and a fifth, who possessed every grace, wanted soul; and that was a requisite which he had a thousand times declared more attractive than either mental accomplishments or personal beauty.

By degrees, this anxiety to discover his secret became literally a disease: it tormented her day and night.

"Could I but discover it," said she, "I might be of ser-

vice to him ; I might repay the debt I owe him, by render ing him service for service."

She thought, too, that few could be insensible to the many qualifications he possessed, that were so likely to make him agreeable to any woman whom he chose to select.

She began to watch him narrowly with this view ; marked his countenance when he addressed a female ; tried to discover by his manner to whom he was attached—but all in vain ; all were treated alike by him, though he generally regulated his manners to the characters of those he was addressing. Thus, with the lively, he would burst out into his usual sallies of wit ; with the sentimental, he would sympathise ; and with the grave, talk with the stoicism, if not the wisdom, of a Seneca. But, whenever he quitted any party with whom he was conversing, he would immediately retire alone to some corner of the room, and appear to ensconce himself in his own thoughts—and to wrap himself up in the dreams of his own imagination.

As time wore on, her curiosity increased till it became painful, and with it her interest for the man whose conduct had excited it.

Several times was she on the point of soliciting his confidence, in the hope she entertained of being able to serve him ; but this her innate delicacy prevented, by which Leslie was disappointed. This was precisely the point to which he wished to bring her ; and he trusted to his own management to let sufficient escape him to make her feel that it was she and she alone, he loved, without making any explicit declaration ; or under such circumstances, should his passions hurry him into it, he still trusted so to contrive, that she should have to blame herself, and not him, for any knowledge she might obtain of the real state of his feelings.

He had marked her curiosity, and gloried in the interest he had excited ; but he yet dreaded the effect of her supposing herself the object of his love. This he felt must not be known, till he was much farther advanced ; till he was assured of her heart, though not of his ultimate success.

He knew that a declaration to a married woman must either rob him of hope for ever, or give him reason to hope for everything : for he had never met with a married woman who would permit the knowledge of the passion of a man, and see him, that she did not sooner or later become all he wished to make her.

His great object now was, that she should know or guess at his passion. But he had the utmost difficulty to accomplish this. Her delicacy afforded him no opportunity of even hinting at it. He had contrived to convince her that he loved somebody, and to excite her sympathy at his imagined unhappiness; but no distant hint—no remote inuendo—and farther he dared not venture—served the purpose of conveying to her mind that she was the object of this love.

With all the liveliness of her imagination and feeling, she had no spice of coquetry—she had no particle of vanity; and never had entertained that wish for conquests, by which so many females, both married and single, are influenced, from the mere triumph of making them.

To have known that any man truly and involuntarily loved her, when there was no possibility of a return, might have excited her pity; but any expression of such a passion, would have been treated with indignation.

Leslie saw all this, and felt how far, how very far, he was from his object. He saw this, and cursed the obstacles that crossed his path, because they were of a nature that he could not surmount by any of his usual means.

Determined, however, to try if he could discover whether he was entirely indifferent to her, he tried to excite her jealousy, by marked attentions to other females; but though she watched him, he saw that it was merely with the same view that she had done so before, without feeling farther interested in it. Completely puzzled and mortified, he would now have given up the pursuit, had only his pride and his usual wish for conquest been concerned. But to feel a passion so violent, that it was preying upon his heart; to feel this for the first time in his life, and for the only woman whom he was pleased in his vanity to think he could not have possessed with half the pains that Agnes had cost him, was too much for him. The idea irritated him; the continual sight of her beauty inflamed him; and he determined to continue the pursuit, and to devote his life to its accomplishment.

To this pursuit every facility was given by the conduct of Trevor, through whose invitations he almost lived at Trevor House. The husband found him a most convenient preventive against any arguments of his wife; and she was glad of his society, as it in some degree amused her husband when

he was at home, and she herself felt a real pleasure in its enjoyment.

Leslie was thus upon the most intimate footing ; he came and went without announcement : he undertook a number of things which Trevor neglected ; at her parties he almost did the honours of the master of the house during his absence, and completely established himself in the good graces of every other part of the establishment; while La Tour, by his flatteries, his presents, and his promises, knew everything that Flounce could tell him of the *intérieur*. Yet, with all these advantages, he made no progress beyond that already detailed. He had done all he could do, as things stood at present ; and nothing could enable him to move one step in advance, except conveying to her the knowledge of his passion, and this he determined at all events to do.

But how, was still his difficulty : for it is not in England as it is in some other countries, where, without having thrown off the robe of virtue, they wear it so loosely, that it tempts every recreant hand to pull it aside, and where no proposal gives offence, provided it is made *d'une certaine manière et d'un air bien comme il faut*.

He found, too, that he had again miscalculated, in supposing that the dissipation which he encouraged, and in the course of which she saw plenty of examples of a conduct very different from her own in wives similarly circumstanced, would relax any particle of those principles which were so strongly imprinted upon her heart.

All the effect this mode of life had, was for the moment diminishing her regret at the disappointment she had experienced in Trevor. It relieved her mind from dwelling too intensely on this disappointment, and enabled her to meet the fate of a neglected wife with indifference, since she saw that the husband was so unworthy of preserving her affections.

She soon, however, felt still more severely the vanity of the life she was leading. It disgusted her more and more with those heartless forms and ceremonies of society, which seemed to preclude the enjoyment of any thing like real friendship ; and Emily being now absent, and her sister incapable of appreciating these sentiments, the only advantage Leslie gained, was that of being the friend to whom she sometimes unbosomed herself upon these general points of opinion and sentiment. This was the utmost extent of the confidence he enjoyed ; and so delicious did he find its indulgence,

that his passion was often on the point of bursting from his heart to his lips.

It was in these conversations, in which she indulged pretty freely in her animadversions against the heartlessness and selfishness of the world, that she sometimes lamented the fetters which form and ceremony had placed upon the real feelings of human nature, and the insensibility that they tended to create: upon this subject he would often lead her to talk, in the hope that she might afford some opening for himself to pursue it farther than she intended, so that the blame of some distant hint of the state of his feelings might rest with herself and not with him.

He would represent the superior pleasures arising from the gratification of those passions which are unmixed with the sordid baseness of the world, and unalloyed by the chilling forms and laws which cold mortals had prescribed. Would launch out in general terms against the prescriptions and prejudices of society; and illustrate these general principles by quotations from some of our best poets, or by examples of those whose hearts had been broken by an adherence to them.

Such discussions as these held with a woman, whose heart was all feeling—whose passions had rather been increased than controlled by her education, and who prided herself upon her enlarged and unprejudiced notions, were apt to be now and then carried farther than very strict propriety would allow, particularly when led by one so artful and so insidious as Leslie; who really, in spite of the ardour of his passion, had patience enough to attempt winning her heart atom by atom; and to recollect, amidst the fervour of his feelings, that the stone had at last been worn away by the water that fell on it only drop by drop.

Once, when a conversation of this nature had gone to the utmost extent, he dared to press it; he ventured to allude to the delights of what he called the intellectual union of Alfieri and his Principessa, of Byron and his Guiccioli. But her indignation that the superior spirits of the age should degrade and debase their own sentiments by *liaisons* which set morals and propriety at defiance, and thus encourage those inferior talents to imitate the vices of genius who were incapable of its excellences, soon convinced him how wrongly he had calculated upon this point.

Not all his sophistry of sentiment—not all his talk of the communion of souls—the union of intelligence—of spirit

meeting spirit—could for a moment blind her to the broad fact that all these fine feelings degenerated into baseness by such an intercourse as that to which Leslie had attempted to give the character of nobility; and he saw that if such a mind and heart as those of Agnes were ever seduced, it must be with her eyes open to the wrong she was committing, and an understanding perfectly alive to the guilt of her error.

It required all his tact after this conversation to remove an indefinite impression which it had left of the laxity of his principles upon these points; her proneness, however, to find apologies for any thing that seemed to emanate from feeling, enabled him to attribute what he had said to his enthusiasm for genius, and she became satisfied.

In large parties, Leslie, of course, as the intimate of Trevor, found many opportunities of conversing with Agnes more alone, in fact, than he could in the morning in her own boudoir, where there were only two or three morning visiters. For who has not felt the solitude one may create in the midst of a crowd when unattended to by the multitude, but wholly engrossing and engrossed by the one dear object of our wishes! But this was not enough for Leslie, because he saw it was not enough for Agnes. In conversations between themselves, every sentiment that was expressed must be his own, and he must be accountable for it; but in conversations of a more general nature, he had the art of starting and conducting topics, so that these sentiments were elicited from others, and by this means he obtained the power of watching the effect upon her. On these occasions, too, he had the opportunity of showing his own superiority, as well as reserving to himself the power of supporting or combating the opinions which she expressed. He therefore induced Trevor, or rather Mrs. Trevor, to institute little suppers after the Opera and the French play, to which only the *élite* of the talent of the day were invited. The guests were, indeed, chosen for genius more than rank, although those in whom these two qualities were united were never absent from these entertainments; which might for the strife of wit and intellect vie with those *petit soupers* given by the niece of Voltaire, and which were graced by the conversation of Diderot, D'Alembert, and the other geniuses of that age, which is so well described by Marmontel in his Memoirs.

Leslie was the life and soul of these parties; he made himself up for them—read for them, and studied for them:

and gave vent at night to all the information, all the wit, and every thing else he had collected in the course of the day; and as he generally led the conversation, he contrived to make all his ammunition tell, and to pass off the effect of absolute study as the result of spontaneous effusion.

Nothing could be more exciting to a mind imbued with an enthusiastic admiration of genius than these suppers. It was perpetual excitement that Leslie wished to keep up in the mind and heart of Agnes; and he generally contrived to be so pre-eminent in this intellectual gladiatorship, so prominent in these tournaments of wit and intelligence, as to leave an impression upon the mind of Agnes that lasted long after the "good night," which he had perhaps whispered in her ear immediately after some pre-eminently successful sally, upon which, like a good actor, he had contrived to make his exit with effect.

He thus contrived never to leave her, but with a favourable impression of his talents and accomplishments; and La Tour always contrived that Flounce should have some tale to his advantage, with which to keep up this impression in her dressing-room.

END OF VOLUME I